The Teaching of the Prophets

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Introduction

The aim of this book is to introduce to the Christian community the prophets of Israel. In spite of the great advance in learning, the understanding of science and the records of ancient peoples during the past few years, the Hebrew prophets have remained almost unknown men. Here and there a man, from a sense of duty, tries to "read the Bible through"; but no one can *understand* the literary prophets without a guide any easier than he can read the original Hebrew when he knows only English. Bible School teachers and the majority of pastors are as much at sea as students entering college. A large number of Church School teachers have had no training whatsoever, and many pastors have had no more than one "course in Seminary" on the prophets. The small number of sermons one hears from the heart of the Old Testament is lamentable. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, and the Kings are either praised or blamed by pastors and Sunday School "Quarterlies," but the great forerunners of Jesus remain silent. This condition must be remedied if we are to remain a people who rank high in the moral life.

The time has come when we must read the Old Testament as literature and history. The misleading term "biblical theology" must be abandoned. It means nothing; there is no biblical theology. The Bible has preserved the history of the Hebrew religion, but, if we want to see all its expanding beauty, we must compare it with the religions of the surrounding peoples. Hence, if we would speak historically and correctly, we must refer only to the *history of religion.* Nor can history and religion be separated; they are inseparably wed. If this assertion needed proof, a study of the prophets would prove it.

Again such a term as biblical criticism has frightened many honest but timid souls from serious Bible study. All these inexact, uninviting, and abstruse terms and titles must vacate the field in order that the prophets may speak for themselves. They wrote a style unsurpassed in any of the world's literature; their

message has influenced the world as that of no other men. Yet, in spite of all this, thousands of honest men and women feel they must be acquainted with Plato and the Greek and Roman poets, while Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the long list of Hebrew prophets remain unexplored. This has been due to a senseless dualism in our thinking. The prophets have been imprisoned in the Bible and the Church and too often guarded by dogmas devoid of all historical insight. We must loose these men from their prison cells and let them have an equal opportunity with the Greeks and the Romans.

In letting these men speak for themselves one must take certain things into consideration. The first of these is their style. Prophets were great poets. They rank easily with Euripides or Browning, but they wrote a more concrete and vivid style. They were not philosophers and so elaborated no theories. Like Jesus, they spoke in concrete, everyday terms. The beauty of their diction has been almost entirely lost in our prosaic translations. Imagine translating Shakespeare into our inexact prose! But that is the manner in which the prophets have been subjected to persecution long after their mortal deaths. We must try to see them in their own metrical forms. Those little *italics* that try to make sense in our translations must also be parted with. Of course, such expedients are necessary if one tries to render a great poet into prose, for translated poetry is always like the wrong side of a beautiful piece of embroidery. We must bid adieu to paraphrases and spiritual interpretations which are always inaccurate and misleading. The prophets spoke Hebrew. Jesus spoke Aramaic. Our own language is vastly different in both idiom and construction from these languages. For this reason we must try to think their thoughts after them. We must study each prophet as an artist and teacher in his historical setting. We must neither *read in* our own ideas nor seek to have them confirmed. We must try to live with the author, and let him speak to us rather than tell him what we believe. In each reference, this book gives a new translation from the Hebrew (or Greek) original and tries to retain both the idiom, literary form, and flavor of the prophet's mother tongue.

Many original names must for this reason be kept. For example, the Hebrews called their *God Yahweh.* The different translations provide the impossible word, Jehovah, and this

name has passed into popular parlance. In reality the word Jehovah never existed. Were one to ask any prophet about Jehovah he would be accused of introducing a foreign divinity. The word Jehovah arose in this way: In the later days, the Jews held the name of their God to be too holy for utterance, fearing to take it in vain. They therefore substituted the word Adonai and in each case wrote the vowels of this word over the consonants of Yahweh. Our ancestors spelled out the consonants of the latter and the vowels of the former and made a new word, Jehovah. If we hold the Bible inspired, we have no right to introduce or change the name the Hebrews called their God. Likewise the Hebrews called prophets *nabis* and in the first part of this book the Hebrew term is kept to distinguish from the literary prophets.

The geography of the land of the prophets has been emphasized in this book. The writer spent some months going over the homes of the prophets, seeing the hills, sea, or what not that they saw and trying in this way to understand them better. The plan works. Too many people devoid of historical sense imagine the prophets as though they had been born in New England and had lived in the midst of modern social movements. The geography of the Bible is rightly called the fifth gospel.

We must also go to the sources in order to make great individuals live. Too often the questioner goes to a library to look for a book about one of the prophets and neglects to study the prophet himself. This, of course, is partly the result of our superficial educational short cuts. We must live with the prophets, drink their blood, become one of them, if we want their healing power. This book aims to make the word become flesh.

The prophets must also be studied in their own backgrounds. Were John the Baptist, a desert prophet, to come into church on Sunday morning he would startle any congregation. Let us think of his dress, his food, his manners, and the time in which he lived. Their environment again was so different from and yet so similar to our own. Of course, Palestine was different from America, as can be imagined, but human nature is the same.

Human nature manifests itself in various ways of life. The three ways that confronted the prophets and yet abide with us are simply the three brands of religion in the world.

The first of these is *folk religion,* the way of the unthinking masses, the automatic way of looking at things. Each prophet attacked folk religion as did Jesus, nevertheless it thrives to this day in America as well as in Samaria. Folk religion interests itself in what we call superstitions, those things which, so hard to shake off, many people deny but pay strict attention to because of a fear they can't explain. The ancient Hebrew folk religion manifested itself in reverence for natural objects with which they associated the divine presence. Sacred stones, trees, springs, mountains, graves, and sites they thought would assist the worshiper to achieve communion with his God. This survives among the Palestinian natives to an astonishing extent. One sees bits of cloth tied to certain trees in certain locations, and prayers at graves are deemed highly efficacious. The earmarks of folk religion are also belief in witches, fortune tellers, omens, talismans, evil eye, dreams, reincarnations, second comings, necromancy, various signs, control of weather, belief in spirits' causing disease; and the "day of Yahweh," that is, a violent cataclysmic end to the present world order. This latter characteristic developed during the storm and stress period of later Judaism into the Apocalyptic beliefs, which, to an amazing extent, linger on today. Folk religion sought in these various and sundry ways to understand, propitiate, and control the divinity.

The second type of religion vigorous in the days of the prophets and bitterly attacked by them is none other than *priestly religion.* This form of religion is characterized by performing a certain set ritual with meticulous exactitude under the leadership of one especially set apart for this function. The minor characteristics mentioned are: ritualistic chants and responses, various kinds of sacrifices, burnt offerings (in the earliest days also human sacrifices), incense, idols, images, sacred days, "new moons," i.e., sacred festivals at certain lunar periods, the sabbath, and so on.

In opposition to these two ways, stood the *prophetic religion,* clear, simple, straightforward, and it may be summed up thus: There can be no fellowship with God except that based on a strictly moral life. All folk religion is swept away along with the priestly cult.

In unforgetable words Micah defined prophetic religion in this way:

He has told you what is good, O man,
What Yahweh wishes from you is
Merely to do justly, love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God.

Jesus' way of life completed the prophetic religion. For this reason Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and every priest sought to kill him as they had persecuted the prophets before him.

Chronological Order of the Prophets

I. A period of seers.

II. A period of anonymous nabis living in mendicant orders.
Elijah, 874
Elisha, 840
Jonah (II Kings 14:25) in reign of Jeroboam II (784-744)

III. The Literary Prophets.
Amos, 750
Hosea, 745-735
Isaiah of Jerusalem (Chs. 1-39), 738-700
Micah, 725
Zephaniah, 637-607
Jeremiah, 626 on
Deuteronomy (prophetic law book), 621
Nahum, 610
Habakkuk, (between 600-590)

IV. The Post-Exilic Literary Prophets.
Ezekiel, 593-571 and Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26)
Deutero-Isaiah (40-55), 546-539
Author of Servant Songs (probably a pupil of Deutero-Isaiah)
Haggai, 520
Zechariah (Chs. 1-8) c., 520-518
Obadiah c., 470
Malachi c., 460
Joel c., 400
Jonah (book about the man of II Kings 14:25), 400

PART I

THE NON-LITERARY NABIS

Chapter I

The Beginnings of Prophecy

THE ANONYMOUS PROPHETS

The careless reader often thinks of the past in terms of the present. He judges men who lived ages ago by present-day standards of ethics; he finds excuses for conduct or vice versa by referring to statements of men who never faced similar problems. So in spite of direct evidence to the contrary, many people read modern ideas into accounts dealing with the prophets. There is some excuse for this, as later editors gave the title of prophet to some of the heroes in Hebrew history, precisely as we call Lincoln or Wilson prophets. Abraham[1] received the title at a later time, as did Moses,[2] though, strictly speaking, Abraham represents the patriarchal pioneer and Moses the law-giver. It is true that both these and others after them relied on God, received revelations from Him, heard His call as did the prophets. Men have continued to do this after the close of the canon, and we are perfectly right today in calling certain leaders who put to use the methods of the prophets by this name. What we shall do here, however, is to study the prophets of the Old Testament historically. We shall see the use and development of prophecy in its various forms until its culmination in Jesus of Nazareth, who called himself prophet as well as Son of God.

DAILY READINGS

First Day: The Seer.

Then Saul said to his servant, But see, if we do go what shall we take the man? Because the bread has gone

[1] Genesis 20: 7.
[2] Deuteronomy 34: 10.

from our vessels nor is there a gift to take the man of God. What can we give? Then the servant answered Saul saying, See, there has been found in my possession a quarter of a shekel of silver. I will give it to the man of God and he will tell us our way.

Previously among the Israelites, a man spoke in this way when he was about to inquire of God: Come let us go to the seer because the nabi (prophet) of today was called previously roeh (seer).—I Samuel 9: 7-9.

A familiar story. Saul with his servant seeks his father's donkeys, a Palestinian necessity. They lose their way and as a last resort visit the seer (clairvoyant), who, by closing his eyes, projects himself abroad, sees the donkeys and tells the searchers where to find them. To visit him a fee must be paid for his services. He is known as a man of God, a technical phrase applied also to the later prophets.

Samuel is here the seer (the one who sees). His duties compel him also to be a priest, and executive or sheik of the community. He has the distinction of being the last of the so-called *Judges*. The tribes have now become settled sufficiently to call the land their home; they have assimilated the Canaanites but a new and stronger force has come, the non-semitic Philistines, who have wandered via Crete into Palestine from their far-away home in Greece. To protect themselves from these vigorous invaders, the Israelites find their national system inadequate. The seer creates an office similar to that of the surrounding nations, a king. The prophet now assumes new duties. He represents the ever revealing God, acts as social reformer, and serves as adviser to the king. The functions of the older seer fall more and more to the priest who represents things as they are. By the time of the literary prophets the cleft has widened and war exists between priest and prophet.

How do we today think about the continuous revelation of God through men?

Second Day: The First King Identifies Himself with the Nabis.

Now it happened as Saul turned to leave Samuel that God gave him a different heart. (And all these signs came on the same day.) And when they came to the high place, behold a company of nabis met him, and the spirit

of God rushed upon him and he behaved like a nabi among them. Now all his former acquaintances saw that he conducted himself as a nabi with the nabis. And the people said among themselves: What has happened to Kish's son? Can it be that Saul, too, has joined the nabis? One of them answering, said, Who is their leader? For this reason it became a by-word: Is Saul also one of the nabis? —I Samuel 10: 9-12.

Saul was one of the outstanding young men of his tribe, tall, strong, and weathered by serving his father. The excitement of becoming head of the people, Sheik, from boy at home was too much for one day. When he saw the company of nabis in ecstasy, his nervous system, overcharged with joy, amazement, wonder, and the sense of new responsibility, found a means of expression. The non-literary nabis (prophets) like the Palestinian dervishes today expressed their religious feelings in ecstatic dancing and singing. This was supposed to be the influence of possession by the Spirit. To this day, some sects still believe the Spirit's presence and activities manifest themselves in certain physical acts and speaking in tongues.

How are primitive traits in religious revivals connected with the early non-literary prophets?

What is the meaning of I Samuel 19: 18-24; II Samuel 6: 12 ff.?

How do you reconcile these phenomena with Jesus' teaching about the Holy Spirit?

Third Day: The First Recorded Prophetic Parable.

Then Yahweh sent Nathan, the prophet,[1] to David and he came and said to him the following:

Two men were in one city,
One rich, the other poor;
The rich one had flocks and cattle;
Their number was very great.
The poor man had nought but a lamb,
One little one, which he purchased
And nourished it and brought it up
In his house along with his children.
From his poverty it ate,

[1] Some Hebrew manuscripts and the Greek and Syriac add prophet as above.

From his cup it drank,
On his bosom it slept,
Even as his own daughter.
One day to the rich man came a traveller;
Then his own flock and herd did he spare
To feed the pilgrim who came to him;
But he took the lamb of the poor man
And dressed it for the man who came to him.

Then David became exceedingly angry at the man and he said to Nathan, So sure as Yahweh is the living God, he who has done this must die; and the lamb he must restore four fold because he has done this deed and showed no mercy. Then said Nathan to David: The man is yourself.—II Samuel 12: 1-7.

This beautiful bit of literature, called a parable, brings us to the triumph of David's reign. After wars comes a literary revival. Evidently Nathan was court prophet and poet. The use of the parable shows an advanced stage of culture. Primitive man used the fable (Genesis 3). Jesus always used the parabolic form, which is the favorite way of teaching in the east.

The word of Yahweh comes to Nathan who feels outraged at David's treachery to Uriah and his adultery with Bath-sheba. There is no mincing matters when the moral law is outraged. The prophets all proclaim God as the author of the moral law. David falls into the trap as easily as the Scribes and Pharisees did into those set for them by Jesus. Here we have a great soul's insight which we do not meet again till the days of Amos.

Who in our own communities correspond to the characters in this episode?

Why are we ready to pronounce sentence on others but utterly unmindful of our own wrongs?

Where do we hear of Nathan again? Cf. I Kings 1: 9 ff.

Fourth Day: Ahijah, a Prophet of Shiloh, Foretells the Division of the Kingdom.

Now it happened at that time that Jereboam went out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah a prophet of Shiloh met him on the road. Now he was wearing a new tunic. The two of them were alone in the place. Then Ahijah tore off

the new garment which he had on him and tore it into twelve pieces. Then he said to Jeroboam, Take ten parts because thus says Yahweh, Israel's God: Behold I am dividing the kingdom from Solomon's rule and I am giving you the ten tribes.—I Kings 11: 29-31.

From this time on, the prophets play an important part in the politics of the realm. They knew the way the tribes felt and would act. The kingship in Israel never proved satisfactory because the old nomad spirit could not be stamped out. The nomad is free; he pays no taxes, recognizes no centralized government, protects his herds and flocks to enjoy them, and does what is right in his own eyes. So long as Saul had no palace (I Samuel 14: 2 and often) and levied no taxes, had no harem (I Samuel 14: 50), all went well. He was merely a sheik in command of several tribes. When David came to the throne, a régime of building began which in Solomon's time assumed the magnificence of oriental splendor. All this meant taxation, and taxation meant revolt. At his death he not only had a harem of one thousand, but palaces, servants, horses, and a discontented people. Then came the revolution and Israel and Judah, never really in sympathy with each other, broke their bonds for all time. In 932 Jeroboam began his reign over Israel, and Rehoboam his brother ruled Judah.

Why does the Palestinian dislike to pay taxes? In what sense is democracy the gift of the desert? Why did Ahijah ruin his mantle to announce an impending revolution? Do you suppose Jeroboam and Ahijah had discussed this before? Where is Shiloh?

Fifth Day: A Judean Prophet Reproves Jeroboam's Religion.

A man of God came from Judah by the word of Yahweh to Bethel while Jeroboam was standing at the altar to burn incense. . . . He gave a sign the same day saying: This is the sign which Yahweh spoke: Behold the altar shall be overthrown and the ashes upon it shall be poured out. Now when the king heard the word of the man of God which he pronounced against the altar in the house of God, it happened that Jeroboam thrust out his hand from the altar saying: Arrest him. But the hand with which he pointed to him was paralyzed so that he was

not able to draw it back to himself; the altar also was overthrown and the ashes were poured out from the altar according to the sign which the man of God gave by means of Yahweh's word.—I Kings 13: 3-5.

Jeroboam's revolt was not only looked upon from the Judean side as an evil, but his religious practices were pronounced as extreme sin. This, of course, was the natural result of the Book of Deuteronomy, which made Jerusalem the authorized temple of the centralized worship of Israel's God. Then, too, Jeroboam let the popular folk religion revive in the representation of Yahweh as a bull (I Kings 12). To the historians of the later period this was an abomination.

We know, however, that popular religious ideas of the masses even though shown to be absurd, linger on. We need think only of the countless *superstitions* and *feelings* of people to be forcibly reminded of this. Missionaries tell of many cases of the new converts in a time of great danger or trouble returning to the worship of the old gods. So here with Israel. The people's long residence in Egypt when Yahweh's very name was unknown to them (Exodus 3) had taught them the common symbolism of the ancient times. Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Canaanites, all held this idea.

What are the remnants of folk religion in Christianity?

How are such problems to be met in order that the Gospel may be better understood?

Sixth Day: The old Prophet of Bethel who Misused his Office.

Now a certain aged prophet was living in Beth-el and his sons came and told him that day everything which the man of God did in Beth-el. . . . Then their father said to them: Where now is the road he took? Since his sons had noticed the way the Judean man of God went, he said to them, Saddle the ass for me, so they saddled the ass for him and he rode it. Then he followed the man of God and found him sitting under an oak and said to him, Are you the Judean man of God? He said, I am. Then he said, Come home with me and eat bread. But he answered, I can not return with you nor enter your house, neither shall I eat bread nor drink water in this place, because it was told me through Yahweh's word, You must not eat

bread nor drink water there, nor even return by the road you went. Then he answered: I, too, am a prophet as you are and a messenger spoke to me through Yahweh's word as follows: Bring him back with you to your house that he may eat bread and drink water. He lied to him!—I Kings 13: 11-18.

The aged Israelite prophet (nabi) feels outraged that this Judean man of God should come to berate the new government. His hundred percentism immediately seeks revenge. How better can he do it than to misuse his holy office? One prophet would naturally trust another since they served a higher authority than the temporal power. The Judean believes the Israelite and goes back with him only to find he has been betrayed.

It has not yet dawned upon the Hebrew consciousness that Yahweh condemns an untruth. The prophet here is considered more as a "practical joker." We see the glorified patriarchs in the earliest accounts of their stories deceiving and lying with apparent ease. Genesis 12 recounts the way in which Abraham saved his life; Genesis 30 tells of Jacob's deliberate trick to cheat his father-in-law. Even Elijah tells a half truth repeatedly on his way to his ascension (II Kings 2). Not till the literary prophets began their work, did the great light of morality fully shine out; but none before Jesus dared to tell men that they must be like God.

Can you trace the development of the idea of telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth? What is the origin of the idea that it is right to lie to enemies? Explain II Kings 2: 1-7; I Kings 22: 19 ff. Read the whole of I Kings, Chapter 13, to see the result of the Judean prophet's disobedience.

Seventh Day: True and False Prophets.

Now (Ahab) king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were sitting on their thrones clad in their royal garments in the threshing floor at the entrance to the gate of Samaria and all the prophets were performing before them. Then Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, made for himself iron horns and said: Thus says Yahweh, With these attack Syria until its finish. And all the prophets were in ecstasy saying as follows: Attack Ramath Gilead and be successful, for Yahweh has given it to you. . . . Then

Micaiah said, Verily, as Yahweh lives, that which Yahweh tells me that will I declare. Then he went to the king and the king said to him: Micaiah, shall we go to Ramath Gilead to war or shall we cease? Then he said to him: Go and succeed; Yahweh has given it to the king! Then the king said to him: How many times must I make you take an oath to tell only the truth in Yahweh's name? Then he said:

I have seen all Israel,
Scattered upon the mountains,
Just as sheep without a shepherd.

Then said Yahweh:

These have no masters,
Let each go home in peace.—I Kings 22: 9-12, 14-17.

Micaiah ben Imlah is the forerunner of Jeremiah. He went cheerfully to prison and as gladly received the reproaches of his fellows and the government. He spoke the truth as he heard it. Zedekiah ben Chenaanah is the type of the cheap politician. He stood well with the king, and the crowd shouted his praises, but he was wrong. How true those words of Lowell's "The Present Crisis":

"Truth forever on the scaffold,
Wrong forever on the throne."

Micaiah, Jeremiah, Servant, Jesus, Savonarola, Woodrow Wilson, all suffered for the truth which they felt must conquer. They believed Jesus: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

Read the whole twenty-second chapter. Note, as often the voice of the popular party follows the line of least resistance to destruction. What kind of strength does it require to stand alone? How does the King punish Micaiah's sarcastic echo of the popular idea? Jesus may have had Ahab's unreasonableness in mind when he gave the parable of the children's whims in Matthew 11.

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

I

In the most ancient times when men wanted to seek God they did not go to a book held to be infallible or sacred but to certain men or women through whom the Divine was supposed to

reveal himself. Occasionally, men discarded even these human agencies and approached God as man to man. Prayer, the heart of religion today, is the remnant of this early approach. The modern races have lost tremendously as well as gained by holding their sacred books, by becoming "peoples of the book." One needs only think of the Buddhists with twice as much "scripture" as the Christians, Judaism with the Old Testament and the Talmud, again more than Christianity, or Islam with the Koran, about the size of the New Testament. The present-day conflicts in thought show us the danger that may arise from limiting one's communion with God to the experiences of others long since dead.

Not so, ancient man! To him God was the living God and although God of the patriarchs and early heroes he yet ruled for all who found themselves in his world. Of course, all modern scientific ideas yet lay hidden in nature's breast. Each event rested on the divine will.

First, let us think of the Greeks who sought the divine will through the προφήτης from which comes the word we call all these people by, viz., prophet. The Pythian priestess declared revelations only after her own will had been put aside by means of inhaling certain gases. When thus in a state of ecstasy—her own opinion and will inoperative—the divine will took possession of her and she spoke. It was no longer she that lived but the spirit inhabited her. Another class known as the Bacchantes also declared the divine purpose. These induced the Spirit by other means. They employed the methods still in use in the east, viz., dancing, music, repetitions, etc. Finally, the Spirit took possession of them and they were themselves no longer. In the Spirit, they told men of the gods. This often had its bad side; chicanery easily crept in and false prophets made easy money or gave "Delphic oracles" that proved the ruin of the one who acted upon them. The motive of all this was righteous, human, and natural. Man desires to know what God expects of him. The Indians, Persians, Romans, Greeks from all this developed an ethical and moral fervor which has given us much that we cherish today.

Side by side with the Aryan came the Semite. Babylonia, Phoenicia, Canaan, Arabia, and Israel all sought God. Here we may include also the near kin of the Semite, the Egyptian. The Semite early thought of God as being on earth, walking in his garden in the cool of the day, talking with men and help-

ing them. But, alas, man disobeyed and estranged himself from the Creator. Ever after he had to seek him as best he could. Two classes of servants helped in this rediscovery of God. The first but less important class was the priests. This class held that God was pleased by formula. They were the codifiers and executors of the rules of the lawgivers. They perpetuated the doings of the seers and magicians. Priests in present-day religion are direct descendants of the ancient magicians. They taught that God desired rite and ritual, sacred days and customs, fasts and feasts, incense and songs of praise, offerings and sacrifices. With this class the second, viz., the prophets, waged ceaseless war.

II

It must not be forgotten that magic and ritual are older than morality. According to priestly religion the worshiper could receive a sacred symbol with one hand and use the dagger with the other. Not so the prophets from Amos on. In the early days, the distinction had not become so clear cut. The moral prophet had not yet appeared. Elijah was as different from Jeremiah as day from night. In fact, Elijah was so like his opponents, the priests (prophets) of Baal, that he used their methods and opposed them only in Israel, and that for purely patriotic motives. Before the moral literary prophets of the eighth century, the non-literary nabi often served as a priest. For instance the common folk visited him on fast or feast days. When the Shunammite mother tells her husband one must seek a man of God, he feels it a waste of time and exclaims, "Why do you want to go to him now? It is neither new moon nor sabbath" (II Kings 4:23). Later the prophet Isaiah declared God as saying: "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they are a nuisance to me" (Isaiah 1:14). There was as great an advance between Elisha and Elijah as between a Pythian priestess and Plato. From the time of Amos on (750 B.C.), eternal war has lasted between priest and prophet. The priest stood for the immovable, the once given rule and ritual. The prophet declared God as ever living and speaking to each generation, often something entirely new. Priests have been the stand-patters, the bitter-enders, the opponents of progress which they have tried to stem with paper resolutions. Prophets have been the champions of progress, of the new. Priests have caused prophets to be imprisoned, stoned, tortured, and burned, but in the end they have always seen the

teaching of the prophet adopted. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jesus, Paul, Savonarola, Copernicus, Luther, Calvin, Huss, and a countless multitude rule the thoughts of men today. In their time they were blasphemed. The paper resolutions against them have been forgotten lest the already waning power of priest-craft should go its way too soon. But we are concerned with priests only as they formed the background to the greatest of men,—the prophets.

III

As we have already seen, our word *prophet* comes from the Greek προφητής. The Hebrew word for the characters we are studying is nabi. We have no English equivalent. There is absolutely no reason why we should use a Greek word rather than a Hebrew word for a class of Hebrew men. It would have been better had the early translators kept the Biblical term *nabi*. In our study we shall often use the term nabi. We reverence the Hebrew Nabiim, not the ancient Pythian and Bacchantic προφητής.

TOPICS FOR STUDY

How did primitive man express his hunger for God?

What is the origin of prophecy?

Why did the Semite produce the great moral prophets?

Account for the prevalent idea that an educated person should know Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, and Socrates while Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Old Testament prophets are practically unread and unknown. How can this be remedied? Why is a knowledge of the Hebrew prophets indispensable for a liberal education?

Why was there always an antipathy between priests and prophets?

Chapter II

The Work of Elijah

I Kings 16:28 introduces Ahab, son of Omri, who reigned over Israel twenty-two years (875-854), being the seventh king from the division of the Kingdoms. This King and his Queen Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, King of Sidon, have gone down to history as the examples of apostasy and wickedness. Both these sins, however, the prophetic writers judged by slightly different angles from which we judge extreme wickedness today. Ahab fell under the influence of his wife and the Phoenician colony in Samaria. Then, as now, every great city had its foreign colonies which centered in their respective churches. We need only point out Jerusalem today with its British and American colonies, or Cairo or Paris or New York. The chief of the nation today remains loyal to his church because the interest in religious matters finds expression in different manners than in Ahab's day, but should a President, a King, or an Emir change his church, he would scarcely, to our ideas, go down to history as exceedingly sinful. The second charge against Ahab was his disregard of custom and national feeling which had become hard fixed in the constitution of Israel's thinking. It must not be forgotten that Ahab was not a murderer.

During this tragic reign, there came to the capital one of the profoundest men who ever lived—Elijah, the *Tishbite*. Much of his life is traditional, having been handed down by word of mouth long before men were interested in putting such biographies into written form. He appeared suddenly on the scene and announced a drought of three years' duration. Where had he spent his boyhood and young manhood? He seems to be an elderly man when first introduced. He sojourned in Gilead, probably in a little village where the people were untouched by the hated foreign influence. He loved the Lord, the God of the fathers of Israel, and only the daring boldness of the young

King in Samaria would call him from the desert or from green hills and sunny vales of the land of his sojourn.

DAILY READINGS

First Day: Elijah predicts a drought.

Just as sure as Yahweh, Israel's God, before whom I stand, lives, there shall be neither dew nor rain for these (next three) years except by my word, said Elijah, the Tishbite, one of the dwellers in Gilead, to Ahab.—I Kings 17: 1 (18: 1 tells us the number of years as above).

This comprises the first oracle of Elijah recorded to us, and for our knowledge of the early non-literary prophets is of inestimable value. (1) The nabi swears by the life of the one and only true God, viz., Yahweh, the God of the nation of Israel. (2) Power which belongs and can be exercised only by the Divinity is here assumed and exercised apparently by the consent and authority of the nation's God. (3) The oracle is characterized by its cutting brevity. Never did an early prophet preach a sermon, deliver a lecture, write an article, or pronounce a eulogy. Action, swift and terrible, characterized the primitive man of God. The declaration here assumes a peculiarly deadly form—neither dew nor rain—for a land which has really but two seasons, a rainy season and a dry season tempered by the dew. In order to appreciate the struggle and life of the people of the Bible this must be borne in mind: From the end of October till the middle of March rain may be expected daily, and from the middle of March till the end of April rain (this the latter rains) falls occasionally; but from May till the last of October a succession of hot cloudless days follow each other when the only climatic friend of man is the heavy dew. How the King must have suffered at the hearing of this oracle. Did it not mean famine and death for little children, suffering for countless fathers and mothers, and, never forgotten by the men of the Old Testament, the dumb animals?[1] Such power from the God of the Nation! How easy for him to convert the olive clad hills of Samaria into a barren waste. Only his will differentiated the happy life of Ahab's prosperous kingdom from the desert's drifting sand. Only as Ahab and his subjects knew and obeyed that will,

[1] Cf. I Kings 18: 5.

could they await the one and not the other. So said the Tishbite Elijah, and it came to pass.

What was the appearance of a non-literary nabi? What was the similarity and difference between Elijah and John the Baptizer?

Second Day: Elijah's Desert Life.

And the word of the Lord was to him as follows: Go from here, turn east, hide in the Cherith valley which is near the Jordan. And you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there. So he went and obeyed the Lord's command. . . . And the ravens kept bringing him bread and meat every morning, and bread and meat each evening, and he drank from the brook. But after a little while the brook dried up because it did not rain.—I Kings 17:2-7.

The prophets waited for the divine word and never waited in vain. What do they mean by this? To appreciate fully we must go back to the beginning of the Hebrew religion when men lived with God. He spoke to them and some listened and heard; others turned a deaf ear and disobeyed. God did not speak to Ahab but he did to Elijah. *The word* has a technical meaning and carries with it the power of God himself. By his word he created the world; by his word he controlled the wind and rain and the destiny of man. The word (power) he gave to some men through his Spirit. This, too, in different degrees. The Spirit came upon Saul and he became a different man. This corresponded to what we call conversion. A permanent conversion was as scarce as now. The prophet felt an inner urge not from himself; this was his authority. The effect of this authority we can see in the records preserved to us; but can we feel it? This should be our aim in studying the prophets—to feel the effect of the truth of God as we let it burn itself into our lives and consciences. Elijah went and obeyed. He did not worry. The situation in Israel was God's care and charge. God provided for the willing servant. How often we usurp God's interest, act as though we alone were in control, waste our energy and strength in foolish worry. Worry is a sure sign that we have not the word of the Lord.

For three years' time we hear but little of the prophet of the desert, for such was Elijah. We are told of his going to live at the home of the Phoenician widow in the village Zare-

phath near Sidon. Interesting is this village which survives to this day under the name Sarafand (Sarepta in Luke 4:26). The tradition of the site has been continuous. Jesus doubtlessly visited it when on his journey to the region of Tyre and Sidon. He used it as an illustration when he spoke in his home church. The crusaders founded an episcopal see here and a chapel marked the supposed site of the house where Elijah lived. To this day the spot is sacred to the Muslims and a Weli (Muslim saint) lies buried here. While living here Elijah performed miracles which are marks of distinction between the non-literary and literary prophets. Neither Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah nor any of the others whose writings have come down to us performed miracles as did the *men of God* of the early days. These miraculous acts are told in the rest of Chapter 17 of I Kings. The meal and oil survived the time of drought and famine. Then, the son of the good widow died. Miracles of the resurrection from the dead seemed not so out of the ordinary to the ancients as to us. We notice that the widow considers the prophet as in some way responsible for the death of her boy. She said: "Why have I deserved this from you, O man of God, that you have come to me to remind me of my sin and to slay my son?" (verse 18). This again is a most important verse because (1) it shows us what the ancient peoples thought about acts of God. The prophet had the divine power as the recipient of the *word*. When he came under the widow's roof, immediately her (otherwise hidden) sin became known and must accordingly be punished. (2) To punish her, the beloved child, her most precious possession, must die. Not till a much later day did the prophet Micah make clear to all succeeding races that God desires not the death of the first born, the fruit of the body, for the sin of the soul. The picture here is sadly pathetic. The man of God does not believe this is an act of God. He makes no other reply to the sadly afflicted mother than "Give me your son." In the seclusion of his chamber, he cries out to God whether the mother can be right. Then he prays for the life to be returned. God hears him in the sense that through the prophet's own effort (using the power of the Spirit) the boy revives. When the mother sees this, all doubt vanishes. "Now verily I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is true" (17:24).

Alas, how many people yet live in the thought of the Phoenician mother. A little child dies and they claim it an act of

God. An earthquake or a tornado mangles and destroys countless lives, they call it an act of God. Insurance companies yet list an act of God as the most lawless and beyond their pale. We can learn from the prophets and Jesus to think better of God.

Does the universe seem to you to be friendly or cruel and deadly? How do we find God in the laws of nature?

Third Day: After Three Years' Silence.

After three years, comes another brief oracle:
Go, show yourself to Ahab for I will send rain upon the ground.—I Kings 18: 1.

Elijah went from the Phoenician village south to Samaria. What a journey! Three years of drought and famine with no dew! Skeletons must have been on every hand, no grass, no flowers, no shepherd lads blowing their reed pipes. What is Palestine without these? Finally, Ahab's chief sees Elijah. He fears because of the divine power. Like the Phoenician widow and the people today who call all serious catastrophies "acts of God," he fears the consequences. But Elijah reassures him and in this reassurance is the beginning of what Jesus talked about so much—fellowship with God. How sad that in spite of the prayers and tears of the prophets and the supreme sacrifice of the Master in this day thousands of people yet fear God.

In what way did Elijah associate God with events of nature? Do we think of God in a similar manner? Why? Do you think it is Christian to pray for good weather or rain? Why? What new elements did Jesus give to our conception of God?

Fourth Day: The Challenge.

. . . and Ahab went to meet Elijah . . . and said to him:
Ah, can it be you, troubler of Israel?
But he answered:
It is not I who have troubled Israel but you and your father's house in your forsaking the commandments of the Lord and walking after the Baalim. Now send, gather to me all Israel to Mount Carmel and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty and prophets of the Ashera four hundred who eat at Jezebel's table.—I Kings 18: 16-19.

Nowhere in history is there another meeting exactly like this.

The angry, impatient, but helpless, King vents his fury on the man of God because he thinks he has misused his power. Elijah again defends God. Ahab's international religion has done the evil deed. According to the etiquette of the time, Jezebel had a right to bring her religious servants, Phoenician priests and prophets, to assist her in the worship of her Phoenician god. To this day a princess may have her private chapel. But the man of the desert could not endure this. Israel must serve his God or suffer, no mingling wine and water.

We have seen that prophets were not peculiar to Israel. Long before a prophet is mentioned in Israel, they were a power in Egypt. About 2000 B.C. such a prophet named Ipuwer stood before his king even as Elijah 1100 years later. This prophet stood "in the presence of the king, delivering grim prophecies of coming ruin, in which the social and political organization shall be overthrown, the poor shall become rich and the rich shall suffer need, foreign enemies shall enter and the established order of things shall be completely overturned." After predicting frightful calamities involving all classes, the prophet announces a saviour who shall restore the land: "He shall bring cooling to the flame. Men shall say, 'He is the shepherd of all the people; there is no evil in his heart. If his flocks go astray he will spend the day to search them. The thought of men shall be aflame; would that he might achieve their rescue. . . .' Verily he shall smite evil when he raises his arm against it. . . . Where is he this day? Doth he sleep among you?" In this strange "Messianic" oracle the prophet proclaims the coming of the good king, who, like the David of the Hebrew prophets, shall save his people. . . . "Specimens of this remarkable class of literature, of which this is the earliest example, may be traced as late as the early Christian centuries, and we cannot resist the conclusion that it furnished the Hebrew prophets with the form and to a surprising extent also with the content of Messianic prophecy. It remained for the Hebrew to give this old form a higher ethical and religious significance."[1] We shall refer to this again when we come to the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah. What we want to note here is that not only the God Baal of Phoenicia had prophets but also the gods of Egypt and Babylonia. But what a difference! Here we begin to see the ethical and moral foundation of the

[1] Breasted: "A History of Egypt," New York, 1916.

Hebrew religion and we are reminded of that parable of the Master's of building on a rock.[1] The prophets of Egypt and Babylonia and Phoenicia have long since ceased and passed away as sand loses itself before the changing wind. The long line of Israel's prophets, however, from Elijah to John the Baptizer and Jesus of Nazareth have commanded, and will command, all the generations of men. Let us see why this is so.

Compare Ipuwer's prophecy with that of Elijah's. Wherein are they alike?

Fifth Day: The Great Choice.

So Ahab sent among all the children of Israel and summoned the prophets to Mount Carmel. Then Elijah approached the assembled people and said, How long are you going to keep dancing between the two sides? If Yahweh be the only God follow him, but if Baal is also a God follow him. But the people remained silent. Elijah continued: I alone am left Prophet of Yahweh; but prophets of Baal number 450 men. Let them give us then two bulls; let them choose for themselves one bull and let them cut it up and place it on the wood but let them lay no fire. Then I will do likewise with the other bull; I will place it on the wood but I will lay no fire. And you call on the name of your (chosen) God but I will call on the name of Yahweh. Now the God who answers by fire, let him be the only God. And all the people answered and they said, It is a good idea.—I Kings 18: 20-24.

This memorable dramatic event took place on Mount Carmel, the Gibraltar of Palestine, and one of the best beloved high places of Israel. From the most ancient times the nations had here found a rampart and fortress. The Tell Amarna letters, two hundred years before Moses, mention it as a place of importance. Carmel brought to the mind and eye of the poet all of God's goodness to men both in beauty and as the first of the land to receive the great necessity, rain. The bridegroom can compare his beloved to nothing more beautiful than Carmel, and the prophet can give no more terrible picture of destruction than the withering of the fair mount. I saw the place first on a March morning from a distance at sea. Above it rose Hermon, another place praised by prophets, psalmists, and poets,

[1] Matthew 7: 24 ff.

and beloved by all the hot, tired Galilean peasants. I, too, lifted my eyes to the hills and understood what all this more remote snow cap meant to the sun-scorched peasants.

No other place could have been found that would have impressed the minds of the people as Carmel. Both Ahab and Elijah knew this because the combat would decide which was really the God of nature, Yahweh or Baal. The translations soften the real issue which centers in these two names which are often both rendered Lord. Yahweh, in the original Hebrew, designates Israel's God as opposed to any other national deity. The fatherhood of one god for all nations had not yet been revealed to mankind. Each nation considered its god to be supreme over his own territory only. Yahweh, then, ruled over Israel and Baal ruled over Phoenicia. Elijah objects to Baal's encroachment on soil not his own. During his stay with the widow at Zarephath he made no assault on her god or her religion; such an act would have been as much resented as when a man insults the flag of another nation today. Only when the Queen who should be loyal to her people, threatened to displace the national god with a foreigner, Elijah rose in protest. This identification of religion and nationalism reigns almost supreme today, 1900 years after the Christian advent. One has only to think of the last war when Americans, Britons, French, Germans, Turks and all the rest prayed to their own conception of God and for their own plans, each thinking (if he really thought at all) that his god would neutralize the effect of the other's power. Again, the flag rituals that sprang up, the salutes, obeisances, etc., at its lowering and hoisting all show us how the prophets of Baal and Yahweh felt. Human nature changes slowly.

A Palestinian crowd surpasses the imagination of a westerner. It gathers in a moment from everywhere and nowhere. The Gospels relate again and again the action of the crowds. So on this day, never to be forgotten in the annals of Hebrew history, in sight of a blue heaven and a bluer sea and a mount browned by three years' drought, came one decision for nationalism in religion.

How did emotionalism control and direct the religious activities of the non-literary prophets? The seers? Read Loti's "Jérusalem" for traces of emotionalism in the Orient today.

What methods employed by popular evangelists come from Elijah's time? What place has emotionalism in religion?

Sixth Day: Elijah Derides Baal.

Then Elijah said to Baal's prophets. Choose a bull for yourselves and act first because there are many of you; and call on your god's name but do not make a fire. So they took the bull which he gave them and did accordingly and called on Baal's name from morning till noon saying, O, Baal, answer us. But there was neither sound nor answer but they kept dancing around the altar which they had made.

Now it was noon when Elijah began to jeer at them saying, Call louder. He is a god; isn't he? Perhaps he is talking or making his toilet or taking a walk, it may be that he is asleep and must be awaked. Then they called louder and gashed themselves according to their custom with knives and with lances until blood gushed out upon them. As the afternoon was coming on they threw themselves into a state of ecstasy until the time of the evening offering but there was neither voice nor any one answering nor any heeded them. (LXX adds:) Then Elijah the Tishbite spoke to the prophets of the abominations, saying: Stop at once and I will make my offering. So they stopped and went away.—I Kings 18: 25-29.

This presents to us Phoenician prophecy. Notice that it is characterized by (1) flesh offering of a bull. This custom was found among all primitive peoples. The Hebrews looked back with satisfaction to Noah's flesh offering and Yahweh's pleasure as "he smelled the sweet savor and said in his heart, I will not curse the earth any more" (Genesis 8: 21). Homer, the Bible of the Greeks, Vergil, its Latin imitation, as well as the scriptures of Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt have all the same idea of God. (2) They called "on the name" of their god. This idea is as old as religion. Primitive man considered his prayer empty words lost in blank space unless he addressed the name. Name indicated character as well, and herein lay the difference. The character of the Hebrew Yahweh was very different from that of the Phoenician Baal or the Egyptian Amen or Moabite Chemosh. (3) They danced and cut their flesh. Primitive man the world over felt he must excite the pity of his god as well as attract his attention. (4) They threw themselves into an ecstatic state. The word designating this condition in Hebrew comes from the same root as the word nabi (prophet). This wild frenzy, lack of all physical and

mental control, meant *possession* by the divinity. This belief appeared likewise in all the ancient religions and continued in great power in the mystery religions of the later Roman Empire. There are traces of it in the New Testament and Paul makes several references to it. I have seen the Mohammedan dervishes (the Palestinian descendants of the non-literary prophets) in just such a state. At the Nebi Musa festival, I have seen such dervishes, frenzied beyond all description with dishevelled hair and frothing at the mouth, run and dance all the distance between Jericho and Hebron. This is a trifle longer than Elijah's run from Carmel to Jezreel when he was likewise in such a state.

We see Elijah here in a new light. He has the grace of a sense of humor in his sarcasm against Baal. Further, he suggests here what Deutero-Isaiah dared to affirm: There is but one God and no other exists. Elijah's implication only served to frenzy his worshipers the more and made excellent sport for the onlookers. Now comes Elijah's turn.

Why did Elijah feel sure of an answer? Did Baal fail? Why? What did Jesus say to sign-seekers?

Seventh Day: Lightning Obeys Elijah's Call.

Then Elijah said to all the people, Come close to me. So all the people came close to him; then he repaired Yahweh's discarded altar. . . . And he arranged the wood and dressed the bull and placed it upon the wood. Then he said, Fill four jars with water and pour it upon the offering and upon the wood. Then he said, Do it again, and they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time; and they did it the third time. And the water flowed around the altar; and the trench he filled with water. Now at evening the prophet Elijah said (this prayer): O, Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, this very day let it be known that it is thou who art God in Israel and that it is I who am thy servant; and that according to thy word I have done all these things. Answer me, O Yahweh, answer me in order that the people here may know that it is thou, Yahweh, who art God and it is thou who hast turned the heart around again.

Then fell Yahweh's fire which devoured both the offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and the water and it even took up the water which was in the trench.

When all the people saw it, they fell upon their faces, Yahweh, he is God, Yahweh, he is God.

Then said Elijah to them, Take the Baal prophets, don't let a single man escape. So they caught them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Brook Kishon and he slaughtered them there.—I Kings 18: 30, 33-40.

Elijah played the second and third acts in the great Carmel drama. He had the right to command because he was in his own territory. Therefore he arranged and directed the proceedings. By his skill and by arousing the patriotic emotions of the people, he had no difficulty in bringing about the general slaughter of the foreigners at the close of the day. The same traits in human nature are described daily in the newspapers. After all, this happened less than 3000 years ago. In the next 3000 years mankind will have learned the spirit of Jesus much better.

We must note the difference in Elijah's method from that of the Phoenicians. He prepares for a heightened finale by making everything seemingly impossible to burn. He believed Yahweh had power sufficient for his need. This is the faith of a great dare, a tremendous adventure. Nor need we be alarmed at the miracle. To the people of the Old Testament Yahweh is the God of the storm and lightning. It is his fire, lightning, which he sends here as he did on the desert. Elijah is a desert prophet and perfectly familiar with all the Moses history which is the desert conception.

Elijah prayed; the Baal prophets shouted. God is neither deaf nor does he rule by absentee control. The prayer has two petitions both pointing to the same end—saving a nation in peril of foreign influences which were debasing the people. First, Elijah must have his own authority vindicated. He has no inspired text or book. He relies on himself even as did Jesus. It is doubly necessary, therefore, that the people be assured that he has acted in accordance with Yahweh's will. Second, the nation must feel that their God has brought them back to a state of loyalty. The answer comes as all expect it to, by fire. We expect God to manifest himself in other ways but that does not make either our or their experience any deeper or truer. The remarkable story has the savage ending expected. But few today heed the teaching of Jesus: "He who takes the sword shall perish by the sword." Only a few

years ago we saw a world which deserved the title Elijan rather than Christian.

Cf. Psalm 18:7; 77:16 ff. for other examples of divine control of the weather. Cf. also Isaiah 5:6. Primitive religion held that divine help came by control of weather conditions, especially through thunder (called the voice of God) and lightning. Why don't we think of our God as Elijah thought of his?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

I

The Hebrew nabi had a predecessor called the (1) *roeh,* a word coming from the Hebrew word to *see* and hence translated seer (one who sees). The *roeh* had duties like a priest. Samuel was such a man. When one reads the story of Samuel he sees vividly portrayed such a man. He presides at sacred feasts and sacrifices. He holds assemblies on holy days. Elisha was also considered a *roeh* by the common people, as pointed out in the last chapter. The *roeh* held his office among all ancient peoples. We have seen pictures in history books of the augurs divining the will of the gods among the Greeks and Romans. The Semites did precisely so. The early Semitic customs are best preserved in the literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians—Semites as the Hebrews.

(2) The *seer* was also called *hozeh* which means about the same thing. In II Samuel 24:11, Gad is termed both nabi and seer. That is, the old terms are beginning to be confined to others than those who denounced unethical acts. Nathan (cf. Chapter 3) is dignified with the term nabi, but his activity was very different from either Gad's or Samuel's.

II

The term nabi comes to us from the Greek paraphrase and so we labor under a false idea of what a nabi is. To many people a (nabi) prophet is a fortune teller, i.e., the old clairvoyant, seer. The Old Testament makes it very clear that we should not so consider Amos and the great prophets from his time. The story of Saul's search for his father's asses in I Samuel 9, illustrates the work of the *seer.* The one seeking a lost object goes to him, pays him a fee, and he, by means of second sight, sees where the lost object lies. Again people often think of the prophet as telling events thousands of years

before they happened. This is not according to the Old Testament. The nabis, just like any intelligent statesman, foretold certain events by reading the signs of the times. The term *nabi* had no such meaning for the ancient Hebrew. To him it meant a speaker, almost the equivalent of our preacher. Looking at their ecstatic methods they resembled also certain popular evangelists. As prophecy developed, the ecstasy fell into the background. Elijah is the evangelist type; Jeremiah is the thoughtful, rational preacher who teaches his congregation. Isaiah could not behave as Elijah because he lived in a different age. The common folk ordinarily referred to the nabis as the men of God. As we take up the different prophets we shall see how they filled the different offices of theologian, teacher, social and religious reformer.

And the peculiar idea commonly held about the prophets is that some are "minor" and some "major." This false notion comes from men who grouped the smaller books together and called them *minor* and the larger books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) and called them *major*. Some of the smaller books are of more importance than some of the larger. Amos, for example, has nine chapters while Ezekiel has forty-eight, yet Amos has had a great influence on Christendom while Ezekiel has had almost none.

The proper way to divide the prophets is into the classes of literary and non-literary. All before Amos (750 B.C.) we must call non-literary because they wrote nothing. Their messages were orally transmitted from generation to generation and not written down for nearly three hundred years. For this reason there is a great sameness in the wonders of Elijah and his disciple Elisha, and many other parallels. The non-literary nabis had no interest in books. They never learned to write. Their interest lay in making disciples who should carry on their messages after they were gone. Isn't there something profoundly beautiful about this? We today use lead pencils and paper; they used their heads. Which is better, a man living and breathing or a book dusty and hidden away? Jesus and John the Baptizer wrote nothing. They too felt the vital urge in making real flesh and blood men rather than books. On the other hand, there is a danger in not writing. The message as told tends to settle on stories and events. Elijah's life centers on his activity. He left no beautiful teachings. One would

blush to call himself an Elijan today, though in fact our civilization is pregnant with his philosophy.

From Amos on, the prophets wrote their messages because they were forbidden to speak. The government had its detectives and spies on the watch for anyone that might utter a seditious speech. All corrupt governments have done this. It is the beginning of the end when a government creates in parts of its people an idea that it is on the defensive. Amos, Jeremiah, Jesus, stood condemned in their time as traitors to their country. Today as we look at their records in a calm and dispassionate manner, we can see how much they really loved their countries. A young Jew told me one day on the road from Jaffa to Jerusalem that, in his opinion, the Jewish people had made the great mistake in not accepting Jesus' opinion in his day. He said he believed if they had, today they would have had a flag and a homeland. But in his day, they condemned him as a traitor playing into the hands of tax collectors and the Roman Caesar.

TOPICS FOR STUDY

What is the proper title for Elijah, Gad, Samuel?

What are the reasons for classifying the prophets as literary and non-literary?

How does tradition build a life of a great man (ex. Lincoln) side by side with an authentic biography?

Discuss the idea of creating disciples *versus* writing books. How do the two help each other today?

Why did Israel and Judah reject their prophets?

What would have been the probable result if the Hebrew people had not rejected so many of its prophets? Are prophets rejected today? Why?

Chapter III

Social Problems in Israel

In the preceding chapter we have seen Elijah dealing with a problem caused by foreigners within the realm. We come now to domestic problems of the kingdom.

DAILY READINGS

First Day: Announcement to the Queen and Elijah's Flight.

When Ahab announced to Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword, she sent a messenger to Elijah saying: May God do the same to me and more too if to-morrow at this time I have not made your life as the life of each of them. Then he was afraid and rose and ran for his life and went to Beer-Sheba of Judah and there he left his servant. He, however, went a day's journey into the desert. . . . And he came to a cave and passed the night there, and behold Yahweh's word came to him saying: Elijah, what are you doing here? And he answered: I have been exceedingly jealous for Yahweh Sabaoth because the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, destroyed your altars and put your prophets to the sword. I am left alone and they are trying to take my life. Then he said, Go, stand on the mount before Yahweh passing over, namely, a great and strong wind rending the mountains and shattering the rocks in the presence of Yahweh. Yahweh was not in the wind. And following the wind an earthquake. Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And following the earthquake a fire. Yahweh was not in the fire; but after the fire came a voice of gentle stillness.—I Kings 19: 1 ff, 9 ff.

Elijah was so human! His whole life had been a tornado or earthquake or a forest fire. Out in the desert he thinks it over

alone. Finally a revelation comes to him—one of the greatest he ever had. God does not work that way. But the old man of Tishbe has his habit of thinking too firmly fixed; he cannot alter the grooves of his mind. "The road away from revolution" is beyond his grasp.

What was the effect of desert solitude on receiving God's revelation in the Old Testament? Why should we have times of meditation? When are we at our best?

Second Day: King, Peasant, Prophet.

Following these things this occurred: Naboth, a man of Jezreel had a vineyard near Ahab's place in Jezreel. . . . Now Ahab said to Naboth, Give me your vineyard and I will make it into my grass plot because it is close up to my house. Now I will give you a better vineyard or if you prefer, I will give you its value in money. But Naboth replied to Ahab: By no means! Yahweh is opposed to my giving my fathers' inheritance to you. . . . Then Jezebel, his wife, said to him: You are king of Israel, aren't you? Rise, eat, be cheerful, I will give you the vineyard of Naboth. . . . Then came Yahweh's word to Elijah, the Tishbite, saying. . . . Say to him (Ahab) thus saith Yahweh, Have you murdered and inherited too?—I Kings 21:1-3, 7, 17, 19.

Elijah keeps away from the Queen but has no fear of men, be they kings or serfs. God has at heart the interest of every farmer and stands guardian over the sacred law of inheritance. Jezebel introduces the Phoenician right of eminent domain, a foreign idea. Her idea of the divine right of kings (and queens) surpasses Israel's limited monarchy. She holds Naboth guilty of lèse-majesté and has him punished according to her standard. Israel never reconciled itself to an absolute monarchy. The old nomadic spirit does not die. Tax collectors (publicans) were hated in the days of Solomon, Jesus and today the same. This episode gives Elijah, always the prophet of the nomadic life, a pretext for the revolution of Jehu which he at once set about to accomplish in order to rid the land of Phoenician influence.

Why did Elijah hate foreigners? What was Ahab's reason for alliance with Phoenicia? Is a revolution ever justifiable? When?

Third Day: The Ascension of Elijah.

It came to pass in Yahweh's taking Elijah to heaven in the whirlwind that Elijah and Elisha left Gilgal and while they were walking along and talking, a fiery chariot and fiery horses separated them and Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven while Elisha was looking and crying: My father, my father, chariot and horses of Israel. . . . — II Kings 2: 1, 11.

Later tradition has the great hero pass as did Enoch without leaving his body on the earth. The idea of God being in command of the heavenly host (Sabaoth) was shared by Greeks and other ancient peoples. Elisha is now the head of the nabi communities. Elijah's epitaph makes him an army in himself. Elisha carries out the instructions of his master but leads a less strenuous life.

How do you account for early stories of ascensions? How might one describe Elijah's death in present-day terms?

Fourth Day: The Syrian Convert.

Now Naaman, general of the army of the King of Syria, was an important man before his lord, renowned because through his means Yahweh had helped Syria. He was a hero in spite of being a leper. And he went down and bathed in the Jordan seven times according to the command of the man of God; and his flesh returned like the flesh of a babe and he was clean. . . . Then Naaman said, . . . let there be given, please, to your slave, two mule loads of earth, because your slave will no longer offer burnt sacrifice or any other offering to other gods, only to Yahweh.—II Kings 5: 1, 14, 17.

The account of the pompous Syrian general gives us one of the best examples of the great art of the Hebrew writers. No unnecessary words, rapid action. A few strokes of the pen and the two strong characters confront each other, the Syrian commander, a worshiper of Rimmon, and the Hebrew worshiper of Yahweh. Again the question of the foreigner arises. Naaman represents the hundred percenter, and so does Elisha. The pompous lover of glory expects the Hebrew healer to do obeisance to him as the Aramean privates have always done. He meets more than his equal. Naaman is a bitter-ender who has the common sense of yielding, and when he does yield he

gives just as much devotion to the other side. Saul's becoming Paul shows the same type of man. Notice that the national god can be worshiped only on territory over which he has control. Naaman's authority ended with the boundary line; so did that of his god, Rimmon. Yahweh was also limited to his territory. After Naaman's conversion, he asks for two loads of Yahweh's soil that he may serve him while in another than Yahweh's land. As a result of the teachings of the literary prophets and Jesus we have ceased to limit God to any particular region. We believe that God is the Father of all peoples, colors, races, and religions.

Can you trace the development of the idea of one God for all people? What remnants of primitive religion return in a time of war? Why?

Fifth Day: Jehu and the Revolution.

Elisha, the prophet, called to one of the members of the prophetic guild and said to him, Gird up your loins, take this bottle of oil in your hand and go to Ramath Gilead. When you reach the place you will see Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi, go in, take him from his companions and bring him to an inner room. Take the bottle of oil and pour it over his head saying, Thus says Yahweh, I have anointed you as King over Israel. Then close the door and flee, don't tarry. So the young prophet went to Ramath Gilead. When he arrived, behold the officers of the army were sitting. Then he said, I want a word with you, O General. Jehu said, which one of us do you mean? And he said, With you, the General. Then he rose and went into the house and he poured the oil on his head and said to him, Thus says Yahweh, Israel's God, I have anointed you King over Yahweh's people, Israel.—II Kings 9:1-6.

Jehu was Elijah's candidate and Elisha here brings to fruitage the well-laid plan of his master. Joram fell at the treachery of his own trusted general who ordered the body of his sovereign thrown into the old Naboth garden to honor the memory of the Tishbite. He then proceeded to occupy the palace, to capture the queen-mother, Jezebel, who as dowager continued to be the power behind the throne. As soon as she became aware of the revolution, the memory of the curse of her

old enemy revived. She never forgot, however, that she was the daughter of a king, one of the greatest of the Phoenicians. Thus nationalism rather than sympathy and humanity has been through all the ages one of the greatest blights of the earth.

How vastly different is the teaching of Jesus: Render to Caesar what belongs to him, but don't forget what belongs to God. Jesus put truth, God, and love before country. He preferred to die on a cross rather than be a Jewish king.

How can a follower of Jesus reconcile extreme nationalism, junkerism, with the Sermon on the Mount? Should a national flag have a place beside the altar?

Sixth Day: The Last of Elijah's Works.

When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard about it so she painted her eyes and attired her head and looked out of the window. When Jehu entered the gate she said: What sort of a greeting is this, Zimri, you assassin of my Lord? He looked up to the window and said, Who is with me? Who? Then two or three Eunuchs looked out of the window. He said, Throw her down. So they threw her down and her blood spattered on the wall and the horses and he drove over her. Then he entered and ate and drank; then he said, Take care now of this cursed woman and bury her because she is a king's daughter. When they went to bury her, they found nothing but her skull and feet and palms of her hands. So they came back and told him and he said, That is Yahweh's word which he spoke through his servant Elijah. . . . —II Kings 9: 30 ff.

Jezebel died like a queen. She stands today in literature the equal with Lady Macbeth and all shrewd politicians. Jehu, the arch-assassin and traitor, fulfills his cowardly ambition by laying the blame on the Tishbite, who laid it to his God. Just so people today often charge their dirty works to God. What blasphemy! Elijah is worse than Jezebel because he hides behind his religion and so destroys the moral power in God's character. Jezebel does her deeds by divine right of kings. Both ideas are forever abrogated by Jesus' teaching.

On the top of Carmel today stands a monastery to the devotion of the Tishbite. The little Chapel scenes represent his life's gory deeds. Some people can pray before his wholesale slaughter of the foreign prophets. In front of the door stands the figure of the revered with a sword in his hand. Jesus' whole

life was a rebuke to all this: *He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword. Bless those that persecute you. Bless and curse not.* The Master undoubtedly had Elijah in mind when giving the new teaching. The old prophet has always been a favorite because it is so much easier to follow him than Jesus.

Which are we today at heart—Elijans, Elishans, or Christians? Do we change from one to the other at the convenient time? Why do we try to serve two masters?

Seventh Day: The Beginning of the Prohibition Movement.

And Jehu went with Jonadab the son of Rechab. . . . The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh. . . . Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak to them and bring them to Yahweh's house . . . and give them wine to drink. . . . So I set before the sons of the family of the Rechabites bowls of wine and cups; then I said to them, Drink wine. But they said, We will not drink wine because Jonadab the son of Rechab, our ancestor, commanded us thus: You shall not drink wine, neither you nor your descendants for ever.—II Kings 10: 23; Jeremiah 35: 1 f., 5 f.

The Rechabite movement (original prohibition movement) began with the prophetic revolt against the importation of foreign ideas and religions. The ancient Greek Dionysius religion glorified wine because when under its influence the worshiper believed the spirit of the god, Dionysius (Bacchus), possessed him. This idea was prevalent also among the Phoenicians and Canaanites. Naturally the prophets fought this thing because their God demanded *morality* even though the non-literary prophets did not grasp its full significance. "You can't live a moral life and express yourself religiously by being drunk," said the prophets. There was also a lay movement under the leadership of Jonadab whose clan bound itself to the nomadic ascetic life. An ancient inscription was found in Palmyra which read, "To the good God who drinks no wine." No prophet ever drank wine. They were the first teetotalers.

What is the origin of the prohibition movement? Why has it been so long coming? Who are the ones who oppose it? Why? Do we do enough if we merely refrain?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

I

This chapter brings us down to the reign of Jeroboam II over Israel (784-744 B.C.) and to the reign of Azariah over Judah. We have surveyed the time from Samuel (c. 1000 B.C.), the *seer,* to the last of the non-literary nabis. The next chapter will begin a new epoch in Israel's history, the encroachment of Assyria and the rise of the long procession of literary prophets headed by Amos of Tekoa.

Great changes have come since the old days of the *seer.* The Philistines invaded Canaan, having wandered far from their Greek home via Crete. They were a cultured people, fought with chariots, had a monopoly on iron and best of all had a king. Israel began to fall before them. To counteract this the *seer,* Samuel, after listening to the demands of the people that they too have a king like the surrounding nations, anointed Saul son of Kish, to be king. But with the kingdom came new troubles. As soon as the Hebrews had conquered the Philistines, the king began to copy the courts of the other kings. It is true, Saul never had a palace. He lived as an Arab prince lives today, in a tent; but his successor, David, built a great palace, had an immense harem and made all ready for his son and successor. With Solomon the oriental court blossomed out in all its glory. To the palace of his father, he added a great temple, built by architects from Phoenicia and of the stately cedars of Lebanon. Now an oriental court cannot be maintained without money and money comes only by taxation. On the wisdom of this latter economic measure all governments have flourished or been shipwrecked. Solomon's was doomed to shipwreck. His people objected to being taxed; they felt it to be an injustice so great that they renounced the new king Rehoboam and at the instigation of Ahijah, the Shilonite (I Kings 11 : 26 ff.), an Ephraimite nabi, set up their own government under Jeroboam ben Nebat of the little town of Zeredah. From that time till 722 the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah kept apart. In the latter year Israel fell and in 586 Judah likewise ceased to be a kingdom. From that time with brief exceptions the Jewish people have been exiles and homeless in the world.

Centralized government to them was difficult and distasteful. They along with the other Semites were sons of the desert.

The editor of the collection of stories in *Judges* constantly refers to the fact that in the "good old days" there was no king in Israel and each man did what was right in his own eyes. He could not have summed up the nomadic ideal better. The bedawi today hates and fears the approach of the farmer. As they said to us last year in Palestine, "They spoil our pastures." The desert dweller is lord of his domain. He pays no taxes as there is no centralized government which must be supported. He is free and lives as do the birds. There is something beautiful in this mode of life. We in our commercial age with its nervous breakdowns and premature deaths, may do well to stop and not make fun. The bedawi lives in a tent which he can easily move when the water fails and the grass has been eaten by his flocks. His wife makes all the clothes worn and churns the milk into curds. He has quiet, solitude, and freedom. He sees God in all things and sings psalms of praise. The author of the twenty-third psalm was a nomad, the man who wrote the nineteenth psalm was one too. Both these beautiful poems reflect the life of the early Hebrews. Elijah probably spent much time in the desert singing his spontaneous praise to God. It is perfectly natural to the desert nomad to sing psalms which he improvises as he sits day by day alone with his sheep. Such a shepherd lad was David. Jesus felt the urge of this simple life. Listen to Him (Matthew 6 : 25 ff.) : "I tell you not to worry about your physical existence—about eating and drinking nor about your body—what you are to put on. Is not life more than food and body more than clothes? Look at the birds about you; they don't sow nor reap nor gather into barns. Surely, your heavenly Father takes care of them. Aren't you more important than they?" Jesus approved of the care-free, nomadic life. He had no settled home. The bird is the perfect example. He trusts God for tomorrow and sings his praise for what he gets today. Men may worry and fret but what do they get for it? They are miserable where the bird is happy. We have lost much in not taking Jesus' advice about the bird and lily life. Be as industrious, happy, care-free as the bird. Be as beautiful and simple as the lily of the field. That is what the bedawi does.

So the prophets of the early period lived the simple desert life,—Elijah and all the rest. John the Baptizer lived that way too, and notice, many people thought Jesus was John come back in the flesh—because he was so much like him.

II

After a revolution, it takes considerable time to regain prosperity. In Israel it took over 150 years for the nation to become rich in wealth and great cities. Then came new voices, a cry was raised against wealth on one side and want on the other, against graft in business and political life, against the idle and corrupt. The social gospel began. Up to this time however, the prophets had sought to hold the people to the simple life. Jehonadab ben Rechab headed a great prohibition movement (II Kings 10:23; Jeremiah 35) against the culture of the cities and the foreign ideas. Their platform prohibited all wine drinking. This went with the foreign worship of Baal, Dionysius, etc. It betokened also the settled life of the vine grower. No son of the desert can run a winepress. He is gone long before grapes are ready to pick. The Koran forbids wine to all the faithful. How the western world rebels against prohibition today! How the prophets of old would denounce our civilization! Their program also forbade the building of houses and farming of any kind. The nomad eats his flocks and drinks their milk. He cannot cultivate the ground; it is sacred to the sheep and herds. The Rechabite movement never died out in Israel. Jesus sympathized with it. He also entered into the life of the rich farmer and merchant. He came not to join any party but to give *a way of life*.

III

Another characteristic of the early, non-literary prophet was the monastic life. An extremely old idea this. Gautama the Buddha, 500 years before Jesus, instituted the mendicant, monastic order and it was not original with him. So the early nabis up to the time of Amos lived in communities similar to monks today. There was this difference—the nabis might marry, as the Hebrews held sacred the command to "be fruitful and replenish the earth." There were exceptions and perhaps the married nabis were such; perhaps not. Elisha was a farmer; this we know but when the call came he left it for the mendicant life. Once initiated, they could hold no private property. The stories of these lives are beautiful with charity "for the man of God." No nabi could accept a fee—the *seer* used to do that. Gehazi's terrible fate shows the horror of the idea of accepting money for an act of God.

Such was the non-literary nabi. He lived a roaming, mendi-

cant life. The members of the guild were called collectively *sons* and the head of the community *father*. Extreme simplicity of life was their creed. No wine could be tolerated any more than a foreign God. Yahweh for Israel and Israel for Yahweh! They never doubted the efficiency of Baal for Phoenicia, Rimmon for Aram, and the others in their own land but they must not invade Yahweh's domain. These simple men dressed in the skins of the desert and eating its locusts and wild honey feared neither kings nor other potentate. Jezebel, the foreign queen, seems alone to have wakened fear in Elijah. When a king favored another than Yahweh, the wrath of the nabi meant a revolution. How different is our next prophet, Amos, the first of the literary class.

TOPICS FOR STUDY

What was the origin of the prohibition movement? Why were prophets opposed to strong drink? Discuss Jesus' attitude.

Why did the early nabis oppose all foreign influence? What is the attitude of the Jew today toward assimilation?

Describe the call of Elisha. What answers to a call in the modern-day experience?

In what ways has this study thrown a new light on the Bible?

PART II

THE PRE-EXILIC LITERARY PROPHETS

Chapter IV

The Literary Prophets

PART I. PRE-EXILIC PROPHETS

With the rise of the literary prophets about 750 B.C., the seers (both *roeh* and *hozeh*) and the ecstatic non-literary nabis gradually disappear from the pages of the Bible. True, the nabi communities lived on, but they were regarded with such disfavor by all parties that their power was broken. Not till John the Baptizer do we find one coming into prominence. And John was so different. He lived in the desert; he ate the desert fare of honey and locusts; he dressed as did the earlier prophets. He probably lived as a member of a nabi community. But he worked no wonders and demanded morality both social and individual, as did the literary prophets. John's activity shows us how the desert nabis had been influenced by those who broke with this manner of life. They had become, one and all, moral reformers.

Beginning with Amos, the literary prophets lived in their own homes, either married or with disciples. They worked no wonders. They expressed their messages in verse and their poems are some of the most beautiful of all antiquity. Ecstatic dancing and frenzy is heard of no more. No such deeds as Elijah's slaughter of the Baal's prophets blot the pages of these men's lives. They proclaimed a new morality as one after the other contributed those things which go to make up the best in our present-day civilization.

AMOS, THE STERN PROPHET OF JUSTICE, 750 B.C.

Amos' book tells us that he came from the herdsmen of Tekoa. He further tells us that he was both farmer and shepherd. We must not forget that all men in ancient times lived

closer to nature and the soil than we. Amos was no ordinary, unlettered peasant. When we read his poems we hear the voice of a man of encyclopaedic knowledge, a stirring orator, a world historian, a profound theologian, a sociologist, a lover of nature, a philosopher, a mighty poet. Without doubt, he had attended the best schools in the Capital only twelve miles away. But best of all, while in the open with his sheep he heard the voice of the living God. He loved the country with its simplicity, its humble piety, its freedom, and rustic love. In Jerusalem he had seen very different things. Here Gentiles, Moabites, Phoenicians, Philistines mingled with the Children of Israel. These foreigners brought notions and ideas from the great outside. They made the people discontented. Here flowed wine and song at the festal board. Speeches were made in honor of those not mentioned in the Torah. This country lad went to Bethel and to Samaria to sell the products of his flocks and herds. He came back a disillusioned man. In the northern kingdom—Amos was a southerner and at this time little love existed between the two kingdoms—he saw the religious rites of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, "which made the people sin." Here, too, he felt the unjust social conditions. The rich oppressed the poor; the society women spent their time in wanton luxury; immorality abounded even in the very temples. In the north, at Bethel he delivered his first speech, short but full of fire.

First Day: The Prophet's First Appearance.

Israel's Virgin has fallen,
No more shall she rise,
Prostrate she lies in her land,
No one shall raise her again.—Amos 5: 2.

Try to picture the Tekoan prophet. His beard fell full and curling on his breast, his hair hung about his neck. A long turban coiled about his forehead. His feet were shod with the shepherd's boot, a girdle of leather held his long, loose garment together. He had come to the Bethel fair which, accompanied by a religious service, attracted all the countryside, the near-by villagers, and any chance stragglers. Here priests officiated at the altar under the leadership of Amaziah, the king's chaplain. Peddlers and water carriers shouted their wares; groups of desert nomads hung on the fringe of the crowd. In the midst

of all this mirthful excitement suddenly rang out the voice of one trained in the vast solitude of the Tekoan wilderness. He spoke in the prophetic perfect, that is, he declared something as already fulfilled which no one else saw. He declared the overthrow of the capital city or as people in ancient times poetically said, the nation's daughter, the Virgin. But more than that, he emphasized the downfall permanent and complete. "No one shall raise her again." He chanted this short stanza of four lines as only the oriental who is not given to prose could. It fell—a funeral lament in the midst of a joyful fair. Consternation, fear, panic, followed. The oriental is susceptible, sensitive, anxious. God had been outraged; he is just. Israel must atone.

Why is a knowledge of the historical background necessary to understand the prophets?

What is the *prophetic perfect?* What examples of this style of speech might a statesman use today?

What relation in the mind of Amos existed between political sin and national calamity?

Second Day: Have Fellowship with God rather than Pilgrimages and Shrines.

Thus said Yahweh to Israel:
Seek me that you may live;
But don't seek Beth-el.
Gilgal do not enter,
Neither go over to Beer-Sheba.
Gilgal shall go into captivity;
Beth-el shall cease to be.
Seek Yahweh that you may live,
Lest fire descend upon Joseph,
None quenching its devouring Beth-el.—Amos 5:4-6.

A daring speech this! Beth-el, the old sanctuary, was held as especially sacred and dear to the heart of God. Here sacrifice was offered amid great rejoicing and singing of psalms. Gilgal and Beer-sheba were both places of pilgrimage, made sacred by association with Israel's past. It is no easy thing to tell a people that their holiest and most revered memorials of patriotism and religion are to be destroyed because in the eyes of their God they breed evil. What does the Lord demand?

He demands something entirely different from sacrificial offerings. His people must seek *him,* not some place dedicated to him. He is a living God and not interested in memorials! The true worshiper must desire to understand the *word,* to obey the divine will and to learn to know the very essence of God. Pilgrimages, liturgical rites, offerings delight not the God of justice. Even the very places dedicated, considered sacrosanct, and immune, shall cease to be. Not all the zeal of the priests and the fervor of the people can delay the fire of divine wrath when he sees injustice. With one blow, Amos would sweep aside the popular notion of religion. He would substitute a moral zeal in the heart rather than the broken feet of the pilgrimage as a sign to God. But Israel was not ready for this. Even in Jesus' day the people could not be convinced that God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth.

Why do certain places become national shrines?

Why do primitive feelings rarely differentiate between outward acts and moral values?

How many years later did the captivity come?

Third Day: Don't Expect a Double Reward.

Enter Beth-el and commit sin,
Or Gilgal to sin some more.
Bring morning by morning your sacrifices,
And every three days your tithes,
Or burn your leavened praise offerings.
Proclaim, publish benevolences—
Yes, this pleases you, O Israel,
Is the revelation of the Lord Yahweh.—Amos 4:4-5.

A caustic message! Why are the people religious? They get pleasure out of it. That's their pay. Jesus may have had Amos' words in mind when he said:

"When you fast, do not wear masks as the actors do. For they disfigure their faces to be seen by men to be fasting. Truly they get their reward in full. But you, if you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so as not to show men you are fasting, but to your Father in secret, and your Father who sees you in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6).

Religion must be something more than form. Yet, how often the services of an entire Sunday have created no new impulse in the worshiper's consciousness, no new desire for the fuller,

freer, higher way of life. Continue what you are doing, say both the Testaments, but, rest assured, in the spiritual realm as in the economic order you will be paid but once.

Have you ever met a person who tithed as a business project?
How can church schools create a Christian consciousness?
Are we unconsciously desiring double rewards?

Fourth Day: Amos Expelled.

Then Amaziah, priest of Beth-el, sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying: Amos has conspired against you in the midst of Israel. The country is not able to hold all his words because he has said: Jeroboam shall die by the sword; and Israel shall be deported captive from his fatherland.

Then said Amaziah to Amos: Seer, go, hie you hence to the land of Judah; there eat bread and there preach your sermons. But say nothing more about Beth-el because it is the king's sanctuary; it is also a royal palace.

Then Amos replied to Amaziah: I am no nabi, neither am I a member of a nabi community. On the contrary, I am a herdsman and a dresser of the sycamore fig tree. Yahweh took me away from my flock and he said to me: Go preach to Israel, my people. So now hear the word of Yahweh. But you keep saying, Don't preach to Israel; don't attack the house of Isaac. For this Yahweh said:

Your wife in the city shall be a harlot,
Your sons and daughters by the sword shall fall,
Your country by measure shall be divided;
While you in a land unclean shall die,
And Israel captive far from home shall lie.

—Amos 7: 10-17.

This is one of the most valuable bits of autobiography preserved in the prophets. The king's chaplain, Amaziah, sends word to the king that the Judean is stirring up a revolution by his propaganda against the government. He uses a beautiful figure in comparing the country to a vessel which, already filled, can hold no more. He then orders him home. What business, he thinks, has this southerner telling us northerners about our government or religion? He uses the terms which since Elijah's violence had become an insult. Amos promptly defends himself. He has no connection or relation with any such union. He is a plain shepherd who deals also in sycamore

figs. Out there by the desert he has seen the folly of the city life. In his travels and from strangers he has learned about the rising power of Assyria. Israel is doomed. The priest cannot understand this. Amos is deported. In his Tekoan solitude he wrote the speeches he was forbidden to utter. Where is the government's spy Amaziah, the priest? We know him only as he flits across the stage where Amos plays the master rôle. The deported southerner supposed to be a revolutionist, after 2000 years is claimed as inspired of God and the forerunner of the Christian. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* Amaziah lived and died in the favor of the king. Amos was expelled. Today the scaffold, fire or exile, tomorrow memorial, eulogy, and devotion.

What was the reason for Amaziah's taunt to Amos and his defence? Compare Jesus' defence.

What events led up to Amos' *call?*

Why did Amos *write* his messages?

Fifth Day: Amos Denounces the Idle Society Woman of Samaria.

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Samaria's Hill:
You oppressors of the poor,
You crushers of the lowly,
You commanders of your masters,
"Produce that we may banquet."
Yahweh, by his sanctity, has sworn
"Behold your day is coming
They shall lift you up on hooks
Your residue with fish hooks."—Amos 4: 1-2.

The country herder on his trips to the Capital has been shocked at the licentious wantonness of the society women. He compares them to the cattle on the pasture plains of Bashan, the fattening place for the Palestinian, Syrian, and Mesopotamian markets. The phrase to "roar like a bull of Bashan" is old. Here the idle rich fatten on Samaria's hill. They crush and oppress the poor. Their admiring men bring them wine to drink, an abomination to every prophet. But their day is sure as the day of the fat cattle across the Jordan. What a picture! The slaughter house will receive these as surely as it will the others.

This is the justice of history as Amos read it. Tribe after tribe had gone down. Israel will be no exception. This is his philosophy of history. Divine law requires a recompense for every outraged law; disobedience means punishment. *Nemo me impune lacessit.* Domestic iniquity is national defeat even before the fall; national security can be secured only by social righteousness. Here begins the *social* gospel which like the bit of yeast, leavens the whole lump.

What was the origin and development of the idea of social justice?

How did Amos champion the poor? What methods are in use today?

Sixth Day: Ethical Monotheism.

Thus spoke Yahweh:
Because of three transgressions of the Damascenes,
Or because of four, I revoke not my word,
Because of their threshing Gilead with instruments of iron.

. . . . . .

Because of three transgressions of the Israelites,
Or because of four, I turn not away their punishment;
Because of their selling for silver righteous ones,
And the needy for a pair of sandals;
Treading in dust the head of the poor,
Making worse the lot of the wretched.
And son and father go to the harlot,
My holy name to desecrate.
Upon pledged garments they recline
Beside every altar,
And wine of the punished they drink
At the house of their God.—Amos 1: 3, 6-8.

Here Amos gives a new teaching. There is one God. His sovereign control has no boundary. His demand for justice likewise reaches to all the nations and peoples. This we call ethical monotheism and the human mind has not gone beyond this. In fact, a hard fight must ever be maintained to prevent fatal relapses to the pre-Amos thinking.

The prophet takes the roll of Israel's neighbors, far off Damascus with the Valley of Aven, its approach, the Philistines, Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and then the culmination—his own countrymen. How bold and unheard! The

chosen people to be treated as the gentiles, the heathen! "Yes," said Amos in reply to the indignation of his countrymen.

You alone have I known
From all earthly tribes
For this reason will I punish you
For all your sins.—Amos 3:2.

The chief characteristic of primitive, folk religion is the idea that the divinity of the tribe protects and fights for and loves it alone. Jesus tried again and again to make the people believe that his Father treats all men alike; that he considers all his children. The disciples nearest him misunderstood and the early days of the Christian Church suffered because of this inherited idea. Even today class and racial feelings present the greatest difficulty to the forward march of the religion of Jesus. Little do the leaders of religious sects realize that their efforts and zeal spring from pre-amosian folk religion.

What is ethical monotheism and what are its implications?
How did Paul treat the "chosen people" idea?
In what ways is the consciousness of children imbued with the idea of superiority over the foreigner, the colored man, etc.?
How is the superiority complex best combated?

Seventh Day: The Sum of Amos' Gospel.

Seek good and not evil
That you may live;
Then Yahweh, God of hosts,
Is with you as you say.

. . . . . .

And let justice flow like water
And righteousness as an ever flowing stream.
—Amos 5:14, 24.

Amos, like Jesus, dealt only in concrete terms. He has no abstract philosophy of morals, no ethical theories. Deeds alone count. Suppose we were to judge ourselves by this standard today. We could only court failure. But, this is the way the other religionists judge us. Foreign students are shocked on coming to America to find that we are not like our missionaries. Thinking non-Christians regard the last war as the result of a moribund religion. Amos would agree. He would tell us to

practice our Sunday theories. Jesus would tell us to stop being actors (the meaning of the Greek word hypocrite). God dwells in an environment of good. Often the place we prepare for him cannot be of any service. The Lord is not with those who merely say he is. Profession is nothing without action. *Be doers of the word and not merely hearers. Wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren?*

Amos' home was the edge of the desert. He knew the value and necessity of water. No more appealing picture could be brought to the Palestinian than the flow of water—a perennial spring. This means life, health, joy. Just so justice means life with God, his companionship and cooperation; lack of justice means death just as sure and swift as lack of water in a desert.

What are the things about which Amos talked? Make another list of the things Jesus talked about in the parables. Why did both deal with concrete cases and problems?

What is the value of professions and creeds without obedience? Why have churches always been named after individuals or abstractions but never once have we heard of *the Church of the Obedience?*

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

I

To Athens, Rome and many famed cities we owe great debts but to several insignificant country places, so obscure as to find mention by no historian other than the one who tells of the villager, our debt is much greater. True, we thrill at the men of ancient Athens, yet we owe more to Anathoth, Tekoa, and Nazareth.

Tekoa today is a stone heap, an imposing stone pile, it is true, but nevertheless, a barren, windswept place. Even the road thither from Bethlehem cannot be described as a good path. The old fable seems true. The Titan's bag burst in Palestine and the stones for a whole globe fell mostly into one region. The natives call the place Khurbet Tekua.

Let us start early from Bethlehem and ride donkeys to Amos' home. It is the first week in May and the peasants are harvesting their grain, reaping by hand as in the prophet's time. The whole family works together. As we lift our eyes beyond the terraced hillsides with their vineyards, across the grain-

fields looms Frank Mountain, the burial place of Herod. The path grows worse as we ascend and unless the donkey is sure-footed an unaccustomed rider falls. We pass a weli (grave of a native Muslim saint) and finally ascend the mountain famous as the stronghold of the Crusaders as well as for the monarch's tomb. The top, resembling a crater, is strewn with remains of the Crusaders' castle. What a castle that must have been! One marvels more and more as he follows the Crusaders through Palestine and Syria down even to Petra. Castles and churches from sea to desert! In spite of misled fanaticism, one cannot help admiring the persistence of men so far from home and surrounded with enemies. Here on Frank Mountain in sight of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Tekoa, the Salt Sea, and the desert, they made their last stand. In full sight of the holy places, they failed. Misled zeal. Amos' rebukes apply to them.

From Frank Mountain we pick our way over an impossible path to the mud village of Khartun. As we enter the village, we see the inhabitants busied gathering into bunches the wheat and the tares exactly as described by Jesus in the parable of Matthew 13:24 ff. Except for this little village no one but stray bedawi are seen. The path now leads along the brow of the rock to the Cave of Adullam, famous as David's refuge. The path suddenly comes to an abrupt end before a huge boulder in which are a few places where one may catch his toes for a final leap into the door of the Cave. A young shepherd came as our guide. I imagine David looked like him. His coal black hair curled over his forehead, his dark, sunned complexion is the "ruddy" in David's description. He had never been to school and in answer to my questions said he could neither read nor write. The bit of the Koran that he knew was taught by a sheik. The long, dark, winding cave penetrates far into the rocky side of the wadi, a wild, deep desert gorge, gray of rock and barren of a single tree or shrub.

We follow the general direction from here and finally come up with a solitary shepherd and his flock on the very ground where 2680 years before Amos followed a like occupation and in its daily routine heard a call from God. He points out a stone heap beyond us and soon we are in its midst.

The extensive stone ruin is in wild confusion. Remains of stone walls are prominent, carvings and a few Christian inscriptions lie about. They mark the last inhabited city, a

Byzantine settlement with a large Christian church built in honor of the Prophet. The old baptismal font lies on the ground. The native who guided me to it called it the *haman* (bath) and pointed out the place where the water was let out at the bottom.

What did Amos see from here? How did nature speak to him? To the ancient Hebrew as to Francis of Assisi, God dwells in his world and through it speaks to men who have ears to hear and eyes to see. The view from Tekoa is one of great fascination to a westerner reared without deserts, seas, and great cities in close proximity. Six miles to the north looms Bethlehem and six miles beyond it on the horizon the towers of Jerusalem jut into the blue sky. How those cities thrilled the soul of the shepherd boy. There were books, schools, and learned men who could explain them. Thither Amos went and learned of the God of the Fathers as well as the distant cities and their gods. The boy loved his history and never forgot that David came from Bethlehem and later made the more distant city his capital. Later in his sermons, he first of all universalized both the one God and his demand for justice on all the sons of the world. To the east lies the Dead Sea, set like a gem in its tropical bed, and beyond, the blue hills of Moab. When the psalmist spoke of lifting his eyes to the hills, he must have meant this great promontory which rises across the Salt Sea like a mighty palisade. Ever changing in its tints and hues of blue from Jericho, Jerusalem, Tekoa, the eye of the traveller can see no more inspiring sight. Ruth came from a land of beauty and her heart must have been sad as she looked across from Bethlehem to the grandeur she had left. With the exception of a bit of fertile valley on the west, all else is desert, drear stretches of solitude, gray hills, barren rock. Not a shrub is visible, even the few sycamore fig trees that Amos tended have long since ceased to be.

II

Here, in sight of the blue hills of Moab, the deep sunken sea, the ancient capitol and the birthplace of Israel's hero, a young shepherd boy tended his flocks. The desert was his companion. Only some men can endure solitude; it brings out either the best or the worst in them. Here, in the midst of the grandest sights between earth and heaven, the lad pondered on the doings of men and their meaning to God. In the schools he had

learned to read and had heard of distant Damascus, the Phoenicians, the Philistines, and his neighbors across the lake at his feet. Their ways were strangely like those he had observed in his own cities and those in the north, Bethel and Samaria. To these cities he had gone—perhaps to all of them—with his wool and figs. His heart burned within him as he saw the wanton luxury, the indifferent morality, the ritualistic vanity, the social and economic slavery of a part of the people. Back in the desert he communed with God in his heart and on his bed until the call came.

Of one thing we must be sure, Amos was called of God.

> The lion has roared,
> Who does not fear?
> The Lord, Yahweh, has spoken,
> Who can refuse to prophesy?—Amos 3:8.

Just as sure as the roar of the lion inspired fear in the heart of the desert dweller, so the understanding of the moral character of God demanded that Amos become a teacher of his deep conviction.

He now began to see visions as he tended his flocks. A swarm of locusts swept over the land in his imagination as he had seen it when a young boy. Vegetation disappeared over night, the cloud passed on and destruction lay in its wake (7:1-3). He besought God for his people as he had read of Moses' doing before. His prayer was heard. But his sense of the demands of God and the blindness of the people caused him again to doubt. These doubtings he describes as further visions. A great fire swept the plain, it devoured the very pastures and the Salt Lake (7:4-6). Again he prayed and his doubt momentarily ceased. Again another, he could not rest. This time he saw Israel as a crooked wall (7:7-9). A wall not true to the plumb-line means more to the Palestinian than to us. His prayer quieted him for a day and then came a doubt that broke his heart. His people were ready for destruction. As a basket of ripe fruit soon decays, so Israel had begun to rot (8:1-2). He began to doubt the efficacy of his prayers to stay off the hand of justice longer. A final pang shot through his sensitive soul and the whole structure of national and religious life seemed crumbling.

> I saw the Lord standing at the altar
> He said: Strike the pillars that the foundations shake,

Yes, break them on the heads of them all;
Then the rest with the sword will I slay,
Not a single one of them shall escape me,
Nor shall a refuge receive one of them.
Even if they dig down to Sheol,
From there my hand shall take them;
If they go to the heavens,
From thence will I pull them down;
If they should hide on the summit of Carmel,
From there would I find and take them.
If they hide far from sight in the deep of the sea,
I would command the great serpent to sting them;
If they are driven captives before their enemies
Even there would I command the sword to slay them.
My eye is on them,
It's for evil not good.—Amos 9:1-4.

In Amos' day, church and state were identical. If one became corrupt, the whole social fabric fell. This sent him forth to the Bethel fair where he encountered Amaziah, apostle of "things as they are." In his defence he appeals to his call. It is God who has sent him. He has not sought the occasion. He can do no different, a power not his own which demands righteousness urges him on. This vital urge, the Holy Spirit, speaks to every age according to its needs and comprehension. How different was Saul's and Elijah's experience. Later we shall see that Hosea went beyond them all.

III

Of one thing Amos was sure, a law governs the universe and this law is justice; when broken, punishment, swift and sure, must come. His vivid picture of the guilty fleeing before the avenger reminds us of the Trilogy of Aeschylus. Amos moralized the Greek Fate. All of this, of course, whether from the mind of Greek or Hebrew or Egyptian is human experience. The survival of the fittest is another way of saying those who do not adapt themselves to the immutable laws of God must get off the earth. The ancients felt this just as keenly as the modern scientist. Medieval theologians obscured the issue. They felt a revolt in their hearts against accepting a penalty; they revived and strengthened a dualism which to this day works havoc. How much simpler Amos' thesis: Get in harmony with God's law or get off the earth.

This seems like a simple, direct statement to which any

healthy mind could readily assent. But such has not been the case. Amos had two philosophies of life (religions) to combat. First, he attacked *folk religion,* which dogmatized nationalism. Its creed might be summed as follows: We believe in our God, Yahweh, who brought us up from Egypt and arbitrarily gave us the land of the Amorite and kindred tribes. He fights for us because without us he would not be worshiped and his holy name would be forgotten. To this Amos replies: The thing our God demands is the foundation not only of social morality, but also of economic equity; it is a fundamental law of the universe which is God's and ruled by him alone. God is just as interested in other peoples as in Israel. This was heresy and the Tekoan was a radical of radicals to the indignant dogmatists of the common folk religion. Listen to his hot answers:

> Are you not to me as the Cushites, O Israelites?
> Haven't I brought Israelites from Egypt?
> Haven't I brought Philistines from Crete?
> And I brought the Arameans from Kir.—Amos 9:7.

With one great sweep, he universalizes God.

The common people doubtless heard him gladly. But what could they do? They were helpless before their leaders. Just so in the later days, the crowds hung on Jesus' words but obeyed their leaders. History shows that time alone can solve this problem. Leaders have party platforms and dogmas. The inspired prophet has only his call. Martyrdom for prophets seems the necessary reward.

Next he attacked priestly religion. Here we have a paid representative who combats Amos. In the Gospels the priests, Pharisees, Sadducees and their scribes personally conduct their quarrels with Jesus. The common peoples followed him like sheep. They wanted to be healed; they loved him as a friend and helper. When the test came, however, they were helpless, as people in such circumstances usually are before their leaders. Blind leaders of the blind, Jesus called such leaders. The stern Tekoan denounces the cult of the priests in no uncertain terms:

> Your feasts I hate, I abominate them,
> Nor have I interest in your holy days
> Even if you burn me your offerings,
> And bring your unburned; I want them not.
> Nor does the meal of your fatted calves please me.

Depart from me with your noisy songs,
Nor will I hear the music of your flutes.
What I want is justice that flows like water,
And righteousness like a perennial stream.—Amos 5:21-24.

A harsher rebuke to the whole priestly system is unthinkable. According to the priestly system, God made the holy day as a memorial to himself at the conclusion of his work in creation (Genesis 1). At the end of the flood had not Noah pleased God with an offering burned on the altar? "Then Noah built an altar for Yahweh and took one of each ceremonially clean beast and bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar, and Yahweh smelled the sweet smell . . ." (Genesis 8:20 ff.). Amos had long since departed from this idea of God's desire for men. His God could not be propitiated with the smell of burning flesh. The priestly idea of religion may be summed up as the requirement to follow ritualistic, complicated forms in unthinking obedience.

Do you realize what an insight and advance this teaching was? The Greeks and other peoples, today praised by lovers of the ancients, still trembled before their altars on which burning flesh (shortly before human flesh) filled the air with a reeking odor. This is the idea in the Odyssey and Iliad. Socrates, who died 350 years after Amos' teaching, was the greatest teacher of the Greeks to his time, but listen to his last words to his disciple, "Crito, we owe a cock to Aesculapius; pay it, therefore, and do not neglect it."[1] Socrates, the greatest of the Greeks, the reformer, the rationalist, on his death bed yielded to a priestly rite. He feared to go into the unknown without offering a cock to appease an offended divinity. How different the Tekoan shepherd 350 years before! A Jesus of Athens is unthinkable; a Jesus of Nazareth is the natural outgrowth and development of the prophetic religion.

These three types of religion remain with us today. The simple peasant who receives communion with one hand and is not averse to picking his neighbor's pocket with the other helps represent the state of mind which Amos combats. An instance just called to my attention tells of a peasant, a devout member of his state church, starting out on a winter's night to kill one whom he considered his enemy. On the way he suddenly remembered that it was a saint's day. He reverently knelt on the

[1] Phaedo § 155.

snow, devoutly crossed himself, asked pardon for defaming a sacred day, and waited impatiently for the morrow when he fulfilled his deed. Such hangovers in the Christian church are the remnants of the old cultic idea of God. So are the denominational *isms* and the greater part of written creeds.

Folk religion surrounds us. Superstitions of diverse kinds, beliefs unworthy of the Father of our Lord Jesus, such as God's sending earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, and sickness; all these point back and not forward. Our New England ancestors burnt feeble old women as witches because their beliefs and ideas came partly from the witch of Endor and partly from Jesus of Nazareth. The thousand and one things that people do every day without thinking and for which they could give no rational reason, all come from this source. National calamities such as war always revive notions of the old folk religion. One of the most flourishing of these is a final cataclysm to the world order. Honest but irrational minds begin to set dates for "the end of the world" and "the day of judgment." Amos had this same human weakness to contend with. The eschatological end of all things the ancient peasants called *Yahweh's Day*. On this occasion he should come to earth, vanquish all their enemies, and set them in supremacy. Listen to the prophet:

Woe to you desirers of the Day of Yahweh!
Why want Yahweh's Day? It is for you darkness not light.
It's like a man fleeing a lion, met by a bear;
Turned into a house leaning his hand on the wall, bitten by a snake.
Shall not Yahweh's Day be darkness not light?
Yes, darkness dense without a gleam.—Amos 5: 18-20.

This was just the opposite of what they expected. Punishment is their doom.

Such was Amos, inspired of God, called a prophet, teacher of a new way of life. God demands *justice*, it is the universal law. The word translated *justice* in Hebrew is *mishpat*. It means a strictly moral life. This was Amos' religion. How far away from him we are. How often men think that professions, reciting creeds, tithing, keeping Lent, giving to benevolent causes, etc., will excuse them before a God who forbids crooked, dishonest living.

Let us sum up Amos' contributions to religion:

1. *Ethical monotheism.* God is one. He rules the whole uni-

verse and demands of all men everywhere *mishpat* (justice), a strictly moral life.

2. *God cares nothing for ritual.* This he says entertains and pleases people (4:5) and so may have its place, but ceremonies in a sanctuary detached from *mishpat* are of no value.

3. *God plans no end of the world to benefit a favored few.* How could he when those who considered themselves "saved" have been as guilty as those they classed "heathen"?

4. *Social and economic wrongs violate justice.* Many otherwise honest people make a distinction between telling a straight lie and misrepresenting something on a business transaction. There is no difference between robbing a bank and robbing employees; nor is murder any more a sin than slowly snuffing out lives of workmen (or little children) for money. Jesus put *hate on a par with murder, unclean thinking on a par with adultery.* He learned Amos when a boy in the Synagog school. He never once disagreed with him.

Amos laid down a great, necessary, universal law. Our next prophet, Hosea, tempered it with *mercy.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

What are each of the following: (a) folk, (b) priestly, (c) prophetic religion?

What are the psychological bases for persistence of folk religion?

What conceptions of God will allow a person to think of his being pleased by smell of burning meat, incense, music?

Why is it easier to sing songs about God or Jesus than to obey their commands?

What should be our attitude toward the non-Christian religions when so many traits are held in common?

What is the folly of neglecting Amos in a popular education and confining oneself to Homer, Socrates, Plato, Virgil, and others commonly extolled in textbooks?

Chapter V

Hosea Ben Beeri

Amos' contemporary, Hosea, son of Beeri, lived in Israel and taught in his own country. He went beyond his Judean colleague in perception of the character of God. The shepherd of Tekoa proclaimed the eternal, immutable, necessary law of righteousness. The son of Beeri tempered this law with the law of love. *Mercy is greater than justice* sums up Hosea's Gospel. He is the John of the Old Testament. That Jesus loved Hosea is patent on every page of the Gospels. Paul quoted him as proof for his arguments.

The book of Hosea as we have it today falls into two sections. (1) Chapters 1-3 tell the sad domestic tragedy of the young man and the call of God which came from his own experience. (2) Chapters 4-14 contain a succession of sermons. exhortations, appeals, and reflections.

DAILY READINGS

First Day: Experience Reveals the Hand of God.

Thus said Yahweh to Hosea:
Go, marry a prostitute
Who has children of unlawful lust.
The country plays the harlot this way,
In following not after Yahweh.

The story like Vergil's Aeneid begins *in medias res.* Because of this, it has caused manifold perplexities and misunderstandings. The following is a fair example:

Once upon a time a father read the first Chapter of Hosea as the selection for morning prayers. The son, a bright-eyed boy, just beginning to think, heard each word reverently as he had been taught to hear the inspired and infallible word. He was troubled, however, and his perplexity grew rather than

diminished as the morning wore on. Finally, he approached his father and said, "Father, would God command anyone to do anything wrong?" "No, no my son," came the answer from the good parent who long before had forgotten the morning's portion. But the struggle in the lad's mind increased. At noon he shyly approached his father a second time and said, "Father, is it not wicked to go with bad women?" "Yes, yes, my son," replied the surprised parent and presently forgot both questions. The son never forgot.

Here is a true story, told me by a saintly man of God, a teacher who has led hundreds of students from questions and perplexity to the light which is light indeed.

Let us today be clear about three things: (1) The Oriental looked back in his experience and in it saw the hand of God leading him to a new and better understanding. Remember Isaiah, Jonah, Job. So Hosea, who, in his ardent youth, met the supreme tragedy, did not curse God and commit suicide but used his divinely given reason and from his experience learned a great, fundamental law which has its home in the heart of God. (2) We must intelligently understand the literary structure of the prophetical books in order rightly to hear God speak through them. God puts no premium on slothfulness nor inattention. To be devotional, one must be mentally alert. (3) Hosea observed society, compared with his own experience and knew that if he, brave as he was, suffered, God suffered more; if he, evil as he was, loved, how much more the creator of the earth loved.

How have we interpreted tragedy in our lives? Why do some men let the milk of human kindness in them sour while others see the hand of God in everything?

Second Day: The Tragedy of an Ardent Lover.

Now he went and married Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Then Yahweh said to him,

Name him Jezreel,
For after a little,
I shall avenge Jezreel's blood
On Jehu's House. . . .

Afterward she bore a daughter and he said:

Name her Uncared. . . .

Then she weaned Uncared and conceived and bore a son. He said:

Name him Not-mine.—Hosea 1: 3, 6, 8.

Marriage in the East occurs early. Men marry at sixteen and girls often younger than twelve. When I was in Hebron a youth of fourteen attending school had a wife and son at his father's home. Maturity in the warm climate comes much earlier than here. When Jesus astonished the temple teachers at the age of twelve, he was the equivalent of a western youth of eighteen. So Hosea here is probably about sixteen and exulting in his first, and as it proved to be, his only love.

Some men love *once* like Hosea; others never really love at all but have many passions. So Hosea's wife.

The tragedy comes after the first four or five years of married life. Hosea was a fine young man, clean, conscientious, and loyal. God can use only such. He was the stuff of which prophets are made. The first child, a boy, gladdened the hearts of the parents as only easterners can be glad. It is the earnest prayer of every Palestinian man and woman to have a boy. This is the purpose of marriage. Hosea named him (fathers do this in the East) a name describing a temporary political situation. Precisely so, certain Indian children received the name *Liberty-Bond* during the world war and countless children were called *Lincoln* after the Civil War. The Yahweh party held that the brutal murder of the traitorous Jehu must be expiated. Elijah's evil must be undone. The writer makes it very plain that the first boy was born to Hosea.

Then came a daughter, not his child. Gradually and painfully the truth dawned upon him. His beloved, Gomer, *his only love,* had been faithless. He named the little girl *Uncared.* Another child, *Not-mine.* The story closes with a noble heart broken.

How does a tender love regard sin? Compare the father of the prodigal son (Luke 15) and the feminine parallel in Luke 7: 36-50.

Third Day: True Love Knows no Divorce.

Hosea deserted by his wife speaks thus to her children:

Bring suit against your mother
She is no longer my wife, nor I her husband. . . .

Nor can I cherish her children
Because they are children of adultery
For their mother has proved a harlot. . . .

Then said Yahweh to me again:

Go love your adulterous wife
Who loves a paramour,
Just as Yahweh loves Israelites
Though they worship other gods
And love their cakes of raisins.
So for ten dollars I rebought her. . . .

And I said to her:

Hereafter you shall abide with me,
No more a harlot to be
But as my own fidelity.—Amos 2:2; 3:1 f.

Divorce, or for Gomer's sin, the death penalty, was ever a ready and easy method in Palestine. The death penalty also attached itself in Jesus' time (John 7:53 ff.) and to this day to adultery. When a bride or questionable *married* woman disappears no questions are asked. Society knows. Enough said. But here is a different, a strange man. He cannot bring himself to divorce the one he loves. He forgives; and he is the first to do it. Jesus never forgot the early training he had in Hosea. The Gospels are full of Hosea, and John's teaching comes directly from him.

Years after George Matheson understood this when, in his blindness, deserted by the one he loved, he expressed his experience thus:

O love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O joy that seekest me through pain
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

Why are many present-day marriages such hopeless tragedies? What are the requirements for a happy and sensible marriage?

What is the absurdity of recklessly following a passion? Why have educational activities paid little attention to this, life's most important event? What is the Old Testament purpose of marriage?

What justifies divorce in (1) Old Testament, (2) New Testament, (3) modern Christian society, (4) modern Muslim society?

Fourth Day: Hosea's Tragedy Felt by God.

Yahweh's decision:

And in that day it shall be that
Husband and not Baal shall you call me.
Yea, the word Baal shall I take from her mouth
Nor shall they be mentioned again by name.
Forever will I betroth you to me;
Yea by righteousness, loving kindness, and mercy.
In loyalty will I wed you
That you may know Yahweh.
—Hosea 2:16, 19-20 EV; (18, 21-22 Hebrew).

As Hosea looked about him he became aware that Israel like Gomer proved faithless to the one who loved her, wooed her in the desert, and led her into Palestine. (Israel is here treated as Yahweh's wife.) When quiet and peace reigned at home, the old love waned and Israel turned to the strange native divinities, the Baalim. The native god (Baal) demanded and allowed a vastly different code of moral life from Yahweh's. Baal tolerated wine, licentious acts in worship, and, in general, was akin to Dionysius. But what has Yahweh done? Has he cast off Israel? No. He yet loves, forgives and a new wedding shall be consecrated under the vow of forgiveness, faithfulness, and eternal love.

Why do you think Jesus had Hosea in mind when he told the parable of the second chance for the fig tree? Luke 13:6-9.

Compare Shelley's "Queen Mab" and show the real difference in character behind the various names for God.

Fifth Day: The Cross in the Heart of God.

How can I part with you, O Ephraim?
How can I abandon you, O Israel?
How can I set you as Admah?
My heart is broken within me,

My sympathy likewise is tender.
My anger shall not be destructive;
I will not move Ephraim's destruction.
For God am I, not man,
In your midst am I holy not mortal.

—Hosea 11:8, 9.

Hosea pictures God as a suffering God. He brings him from the lofty mountains, from the starry heavens, yes, even from the seclusion of the temple, into the tragedy and joy of everyday life. Precisely so Jesus tells the Samaritan woman no longer to hold either her or the Jewish tradition—neither in Zion nor Gerizim is God (John 4:20 ff.). He is in every sob, prayer, pain, and joy, in every inspiration, and in every *love*. This is what Francis Thompson means in his

Jesus walking on the waters,
Not of Genneseret but Thames.

This is George Matheson's "love that wilt not let me go." God cannot cast off Ephraim any more than Hosea could reject Gomer. True love is abiding love.

Fire cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it.

God cries out, "How can I part with Israel, whom as the little child, Ephraim, He led by the hand?"

Hosea's style is a series of everyday occurrences. Here is the peasant woman leading her little boy by the hand. Then the *horrible example* comes, Admah and Zeboim. These are the Sodom and Gomorrah cities, the wicked cities of antiquity. No, God cannot bring such destruction on his child Ephraim. Long afterward Jesus standing where Hosea stood before him said: "If you, evil as you are, know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

What was the gradual development of the universalizing of God's interests, feelings, and love? Can you explain how Hosea did for God's love what Amos did for his demand for justice?

What is the difference in Hosea's conception of God from that of the author of Genesis 19?

Has our conception of God been that of Genesis or that of Hosea and Jesus?

Sixth Day:

For I desire love,
And not sacrifice;
And knowledge of God,
Rather than burnt offerings.
So turn to God,
Practice love and justice,
And trust in God evermore.
—Hosea 6: 6, 12: 7 (Hebrew) (6 Eng.)

Turn back and read Amos 5: 21-24. Here Hosea shows his agreement with and his departure from the Judean prophet. Hosea says justice is not enough. He knew that justice may be hard, cold, even cruel. It is the spirit back of the act which counts. Laws thus often defeat their own purposes. "The letter kills but the spirit begets life."

Hosea insists on another new requirement, viz., *knowledge*. He rationalizes not only his life's tragedy but he also wants an intelligent comprehension of God. He is the first to mention this. Afterward Socrates taught a similar teaching to the Greeks but he fell as far below Hosea as we have seen in the comparison with Amos. Hosea believes that if men know the difference between right and wrong and interpret this knowledge in the light of God's character, they will not go wrong. Knowledge and love together perfect a man's life.

How does Socrates compare with Amos and Hosea as to teaching, influence, contribution to present day civilization?

Did Amos and Hosea agree on the insanity of sacrifice and all its attendant beliefs? How did their conception of God make such practices ridiculous?

Did Hosea have an intuitive vision of the Golden Rule?

Seventh Day:

Their silver and gold have they used
For their own destruction with idols.
I reject thy calf, O Samaria,
My anger has flared up against them.

. . . . .

It is a thing the workmen have made.
Verily, no God can it be;
Yea, it shall be shattered to pieces.
Calf of Samaria!—Hosea 8: 4b, ff.

Here comes Hosea in a new rôle, the iconoclast, the image breaker. As in peasant homes in Russia, Italy, China, India, and many lands one finds ikons, images, symbolic of the zeal and devotion of the people, so in ancient Israel. The modern ikons represent Jesus, the saints or Buddha as the case may be; in ancient Isŕael as in Egypt, the peasants represented God in the form of a young bull. Primitive man thought of the Divinity as embodying the strength of nature, power of reproduction, and vitality. The bull symbolized all this. Hosea is the first to protest against this representation of God.

We can trace the history of this crude representation in Israel. Exodus 32:4 ff. tells the story of the time of wavering faith in the desert. The untutored minds of the recently emancipated slaves cried out for a visible representation of Yahweh, the God of their deliverance (Exodus 6). During Moses' absence, Aaron yielded to their entreaty and prepared for them a bull and said: "This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of Egypt." Of course, it was perfectly natural for a people long surrounded by Egyptian environment to think of the Divinity as their masters did. One only needs to go to the desert tombs of Sakkhara today to see the power of this old belief. There surrounded by sands one sees the Serapeum, a huge subterranean crypt in which the bulls sacred to Ptah were embalmed and honored. These holy tombs probably had been seen by the Hebrews; at any rate, they had lived in the environment of the sacred Apis.

Exodus 32:35 tells us that "Yahweh smote the people because they made the calf"; but beliefs die hard. The conservative party could not easily be induced to part with their calf-creed. In the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam (932-915) the old belief came to the front. The conservative party won. A bull shrine was built at Bethel, the southern border of the Kingdom and another at Dan, the northern boundary. These shrines Hosea attacked with unrelenting zeal. To him there could be no greater blasphemy than to represent God by such an animal. God is love; God is spirit. He can be represented no longer by the old nature symbols. Jesus and John long afterward put into final form Hosea's great truth.

Why does the untutored mind crave a totem, an idol or an image to represent the Divinity?

How did Jesus and John perfect Hosea's teaching?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

The first verse of the book of Hosea merely tells us that his father's name was Beeri and that he prophesied in the days of certain kings. Hence, we can date him, but that is all. Most scholars, however, believe that the internal evidence of his book points to the fact that his home was in Israel. In 7:5 he calls the king of Samaria "our king." Again, his whole message is directed to Israel, the faithless wife of Yahweh.

I

THE EXTRA-CANONICAL LEGENDS OF HOSEA

The accounts of Hosea outside the Bible are of great interest. These records we must call legends. Legend, of course, means simply stories long handed down by word of mouth and finally put into a form to be read. (The word is an abridgment of the Latin *legenda* which means something that *must be read.* Many persons have put an utterly false interpretation on this word, connecting legend with lying. There is in reality, no other resemblance except that both words begin with the same letter! Legends may be authentic history.)

The first of these legends deals with Hosea's home. As we have noted, neither did Hosea tell us his native village, as did Amos, nor has an editor done so as in the case of several early, non-literary nabis.

Tradition has it that Hosea was a native of Gilead. If so, he lived like Francis of Assisi in an atmosphere of great beauty. Gilead is the Perea of the Gospels. If the Greek theory is correct, natural beauty had much to do with creating pure and noble souls. Any lover either of Francis or Hosea feels this to be true when he surveys either Assisi or Gilead. "Is there no *balm* in Gilead," like the "withering of Carmel," betokened to the ancient Hebrews utter desolation. And well it might! Gilead is in spring and early summer "a thing of beauty and a joy forever." Singing birds, running brooks, green hills capped with an inimitable blue sky, an abundance of trees and vines. No greater contrast with the Judean barrenness can be imagined. In crossing from Gilead to the Jordan valley, I understood for the first time Joshua's prayer, "O that we had been contented and stayed beyond the Jordan" (Joshua 7:7).

The modern, flourishing town of Es-Salt is certainly the site of an ancient city and near it towers Jebel Ôsha', Mount Hosea.

Here the natives worship and pray to the prophet, honored alike by Muslim, Jew, and Christian. The Arab has given it the modern name Ôsha' (Arabic for Hosea). How old the tradition is, we do not know. Some scholars hold it to be of Jewish origin. It may well be older. Folk etymologies, beliefs, and identifications, like the golden calves, die out slowly. There is, in reality, no good reason to discard this popular identification. Perhaps Hosea walked the very streets of the present-day pilgrims and beheld the same grandeur from the top of the mount called after him. From here, he surveyed the greater part of Palestine. He saw the Jordan wind like a ribbon among the tropical reeds on its banks, gradually bounded by the bare yellow sand until it disappeared into the Dead Sea. Beyond he saw the highland of Judah topped by the Mount of Olives; Samaria crested by Gerizim and Ebal; Mount Tabor and the hills of Nazareth.

It is almost certain that he was a villager. His whole book breathes the air of the village rather than the bedouin camp. He has given us a perfect picture of the village bake house in one of his poems:

> They prepared their minds like an oven,
> All the night their anger sleeps,
> With morning comes flaming fire.
> All of them are heated like an oven,
> So that they destroy their judges.
> Each of their kings falls low,
> No one of them calls upon me.
> O, Ephraim, among the nations!
> He is wasting himself away!
> O, Ephraim, you are like a cake,
> Yes, like a cake half baked.—Hosea 7:6-8.

No nomad would write like that. Some have even suggested that he may himself have been a baker. But that is mere supposition. He uses other figures just as apt for the village.

A second tradition and one of no less interest is that held by the Muslims. As I have said, all these religions revere the supposed tomb of the prophet on the summit of Jebel Ôsha'. The Muslim religious teacher refers to Hosea 13:5 as a direct prophecy of Muhammed:

> It is I who shepherded you in the wilderness
> In a land deserted and waste.

Of this verse Tabari says: "The Arab nation is that to which there was not and there shall not be a similar one, and the Prophet (i.e., Muhammed) is the man that God has brought up and shepherded in the arid desert and the waste wilderness. This is a concise prophecy, but sufficient to anyone whom God has favored with His guidance." Precisely so, Matthew uses Hosea 11:1

> Because Israel my child I loved,
> And from Egypt I called my son,

to refer to Jesus.

II

HOSEA, TEACHER OF THE MORAL LIFE

The moral and spiritual program of Amos demands and receives the respect and obedience of every thoughtful, earnest, honest-minded person. It sets a new goal for Israel; it begins a new era. Yet, somehow, Amos' philosophy seems hard as it is just; its austere warning "seek good and not evil" although as valid as the Sermon on the Mount lacks the gentle breath of tender love found in the latter and in Hosea. So the Son of Beeri supplements the plain speaker of Tekoa.

After all, life cannot be reduced to a menu card ritual nor to a hard and fast, unrelenting law. If your brother sin against you, forgive him seventy-seven times over. Mercy and love must temper justice. If a man lie once, give him a chance to be ashamed. Prisons and a multitude of laws may make more criminals than the slums. Shakespeare felt this when he has Portia say:

> The quality of mercy is not strain'd;
> It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven,
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:
> 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
> The throned monarch better than his crown:
> His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
> The attribute of law and majesty,
> Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
> But mercy is above his sceptred sway,
> It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
> It is an attribute of God himself;
> And earthly power doth then show likest God's
> When mercy seasons justice.—Merchant of Venice, IV, 1.

Perhaps only a young man could have given the world this great lesson. Hosea's ardent youth had not been soured by tragedies of his contemporaries; nor had the scandal mongers poisoned his mind. So, too, the religion of Jesus is a youth program, a young man's philosophy, set over against that of the blasé elders, scribes, and Pharisees. Unless one has a young heart or begins in youth, he cannot fully appreciate nor appropriate Jesus' program. "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors . . . but I say to you" never receives a welcome from the old conservatives. Even Jesus' family found fault with him and on occasion accused him of being insane. We may be sure Hosea's family considered him quite foolish. In like manner the dramatic trial of Francis of Assisi was no isolated fact in history. Jesus died when thirty; Muhammed received his first revelation at fifty. This explains to a large extent, the freshness and possibilities in Christianity over against the sterile orthodoxy of the Koran.

III

True to the prophetic principle, Hosea fought wine in all its various forms. He opposed it precisely as a sensible, modern, temperance advocate. His reason is that

> Wine steals away the reason.—Hosea 4 : 11.

Again Shakespeare, who drew many of his best things from Hosea, quotes him almost verbally:

> O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!—Othello, II, 3.

Both challenge strong drink because it destroys the God-part of a man, his reason, his sense of mercy and love. Amos challenged alcohol as did the former temperance advocates, on religious grounds. That was an old and antiquated notion that wine, a symbol of the civilization of Philistia and Canaan, went with foreign Baalim and idol worship. No reformer can make progress today by attacking Baal any more than did Don Quixote against the windmills. But sensible people do not propose to ruin reason. As soon as education begins to campaign, the powers of evil scatter. It is said that Socrates often finished a speech standing alone while all the other banqueters snored off their debauchery under the table. The Athenian

philosopher refrained from wine for the same reason as did Hosea, viz., because it destroyed reasoning power.

Almost exactly 200 years after Hosea, Gautama, the Enlightened (Buddha), was born not far from the Ganges. He, too, resembled Socrates and Hosea. One of his parables runs thus:

"It is precisely as if there were a cup of water, possessing color, possessing odor, possessing flavor, and it were mingled with poison, and a man were to approach,—desiring to live, not desiring to die,—desiring pleasure, averse to pain,—and they were to say to that man: 'Ho, fellow! here is a cup of water, possessing color, possessing odor, possessing flavor, and it is mingled with poison. If you wish, drink! For if you drink, it will please you, both with color and with odor and with flavor. But by drinking, you will incur either death or mortal pain.' He would drink it without reflecting; he would not refuse. For when he drank it, it would please him, both with color and with odor and with flavor. But by drinking, he would incur either death or mortal pain."

Truly, a fine picture of the thoughtless tippler! Barring a few local peculiarities of thinking, had Hosea, Socrates, and Buddha met, they would have agreed one with the other. Herein lies the charm of prophets, they are universal in sympathy, love, and charm.

Hosea's insistence on knowledge was new. He pioneered. Yet a spurious and false understanding of the work of the prophets keeps the name of Hosea out of the "Pronouncing Biographical Dictionary" of such a book as Webster's Unabridged Dictionary and many like it, while no editor would think of omitting either Socrates or Buddha. The prophets have been imprisoned in the Bible and the churches long enough. We must loose their bands and set them free.

IV

HOSEA THE STATESMAN

The son of Beeri took up the message of doom left by Amos. Nothing can save an apple rotting at the core! Just so, Israel's *decline* summoned ever nearer and nearer its *fall.*

Glancing again at the editor's preface and the name of the prophet's son, we see that Hosea lived in turbulent times. The dynasty of Jehu, the evil work of the nabi, Elijah, had to be atoned for by blood and suffering. Jeroboam II (784-744) was

Israel's last stable king. Assyria demanded of his weak, vacillating successors tribute which meant the blood and bone of the struggling and imperfect confederacy.

In 734 Tiglath-Pileser came into Syria. Menahem, who was now king, levied taxes for the Assyrian king to the value of a thousand talents of silver. This prompt action staved off the threatened invasion; but it also caused more internal confusion. Revolution and assassination, robberies and crime were the order of the day. Hosea thus sums up the situation:

Hear Yahweh's word, O Israel.
A quarrel has He with the inhabitants of the land,
For there is neither loyalty nor love
Nor is there knowledge of God in the land.
In every oath they perjure themselves.
Murder, thievery, adultery, revolt;
Only a succession of deeds of blood!
Therefore the land mourns, with the fulness thereof,
The beasts of the field, the birds of heaven, the fish of the sea.
—Hosea 4:1-3.

But, let no man complain: How could it be different? The people have no trusty leaders, priest is like people and even the prophet has become as bad as the priest. The people are ruined for lack of knowledge. Those who reject knowledge die in their ignorance. He next summons the King, for he too is guilty. Like the people, priests, and nabis he has been disloyal to his God. Some scholars have thought that Hosea was opposed to the institution of the kingdom as a whole, but there is no warrant for such a conclusion. He merely attacks the abuses of his day.

Under the rule of Pekah (734-730), Israel joined with Syria in a confederacy against Assyria. But what could these little countries do against their great enemy? They resolved to ask Ahaz, king of Judah, to join the Allies. He refused at the instigation of his prime minister, Isaiah. But Ahaz feared and later submitted to Tiglath Pileser and paid tribute. This submission saved Judah's life as a nation for 150 years. Israel went the way of the transgressor. In 722 the kingdom fell, verifying the words of Amos and Hosea and showing the outcome of the corrupt revolutionary policy of Elijah.

It is true that Hosea contented himself with his own people and their God. He did not concern himself with the universal

monotheism of Amos. Yet, he supplements him in declaring that God is spiritual and cannot be represented by images or golden bulls.

What became of Hosea, we do not know. It is enough to have seen into his gentle, loving, loyal heart. He was misunderstood, not appreciated and made fun of; yet, he is the spiritual lamp lighting the way to Him who completed the message of love.

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

How did Amos and Hosea supplement each other?

Why did Hosea repudiate the political work of the old nabi Elijah?

Why did Amos not attack image worship? Why did Hosea?

The Gospel of Hosea—

How did Hosea's experiences lead him to a new insight into God? Why do we not use our own experiences in a similar way? What is the folly of thinking that God does not reveal himself today exactly as he did to Hosea?

What does Hosea mean by *love*. Cf. the New Testament teaching, *God is love. We love because he first loved us. He who loves God, must love his brother* (*neighbor*) *also.*

What are the implications of Hosea's new teaching of the necessity for *knowledge of God?* Wherein did he resemble Socrates?

Compare Hosea and Jonadab ben Rechab (Jeremiah 35) as temperance advocates. What is the relation between religion and temperance reform?

Has the influence of Hosea been greater than that of any other teacher before Jesus? Why did not ancient writers refer to Hosea when quoting him?

Chapter VI

Isaiah of Jerusalem

The Book of Isaiah, as we have it today, represents the work of several men. The ancient method of book-making differed so widely from ours that it is difficult at first to read this big collection of sixty-six chapters. All competent scholars divide the poems as follows:

Chapters 1-39, Isaiah of Jerusalem, 738-700 B.C.; Chapters 40-55, Deutero-Isaiah, 546-539; Chapters 56-66, Trito-Isaiah, 520 on.

The situation arose in this way. Ancient writers cared nothing for dates nor names nor royalties. They wrote because they had to, preferring always to declare a living message to living men from a living God. They left their disciples to collect their poems and addresses, and later collectors put them together in a generally confused manner. For example, take the book called after Isaiah. It falls into the three general divisions as outlined above. A careful study of each of these divisions reveals the fact that several later sections have been added. These need not concern us here as we are trying to understand the message of a great man.

The first thing to do toward the understanding of Isaiah (or any other prophet) is to bring an historical sense to the several poems and addresses and to arrange them in chronological order. For instance, Isaiah's first poem, his call to be a prophet, should stand first according to our method of writing history. The editor of the book as it has come down to us put it after what he considered the prophet's chief message. So it forms chapter six in the text. We must read it first, if we seriously care to understand this great man.

Isaiah of Jerusalem is often considered the greatest of the prophets. The old adage, *de gustibus non disputandum,* however, must not be forgotten. Some choose Jeremiah, others Deutero-Isaiah and so on. What we must do first is to under-

stand these men, afterward, if we so desire, we may debate their respective excellencies.

Chapters 1-39 may be conveniently divided into six books as follows: 1-5, 6-12, 13-23, 24-27, 28-35, 36-39.

DAILY READINGS

First Day: Isaiah's Call.

In the year of King Uzziah's death (i.e., 738 B.C.) I saw the Lord sitting on a high and exalted throne and the trains of his garment filled the temple. Supernatural beings were attending him, each of which had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two his loins, and with the other two he flew. Now they called to each other saying:

> Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of Hosts,
> The whole world is full of His glory.

And when they called the foundations of the threshold shook with the sound; and the house began to fill with smoke. Then I said:

> Alas for me! 'Tis my destruction!
> (For a man unclean of lips am I,
> And in the midst of unclean lips I dwell.)
> Because the King, Yahweh of Hosts,
> Mine eyes have seen.

Then one of the supernatural beings flew to me, holding in his hand a coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth, saying:

> Lo, this has touched your lip,
> Your guilt has departed, your sin is atoned.

Then I heard the Lord's voice saying:

> Whom shall I send?
> Who for us will go?

I said:

> Here I am,
> Send me.

And he said, Go.

—Isaiah 5:1-2, 7.

Isaiah was a young city man. Some scholars think he was related to the royal family. At any rate, he was in very differ-

ent circumstances from either Amos or Hosea. Like Francis of Assisi, he had all the luxuries and refinements, the culture and pleasure that money could buy. But he was restless, uneasy, and disquieted. The question haunting him continually was his life's work. What should he do? One day he went into the temple. His reason was identical with that of the man pictured in Psalm 73:16 ff.

> When I pondered how I might know this
> 'Twas labor in mine eyes
> Till I went into the sanctuary of God.

The Easterner thought of God as living in the temple. So Isaiah meditated and suddenly he beheld a vision. He saw God as did his fathers, a king, a king of armies, a mighty warrior God. He sat in majesty on an oriental throne and his attendants stood around him. The attendants are called *seraphim.* Just what the nature of these creatures was, we do not know. They were some sort of supernatural beings. Ezekiel has similar figures, as has the Revelation of John.

These heavenly beings conduct a praise service exactly as the temple servants, singing in antiphonal chants:

> Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh!
> Yahweh Sabaoth!

These words are difficult to render by any single English equivalents. Kadosh, usually translated *holy,* means in Hebrew *separate from, unique in nature and being.* It means here that Yahweh, the powerful, is almighty; He also is unique, different from the people. He is without taint or sin, He is holy.

Immediately Isaiah knew what was his trouble. He could not speak for God through unclean lips. God purified him. But, then, how could he dwell apart from his contaminating environment? He could not. He must keep himself "unspotted from the world." His inquiry was at an end. From this time on, he acted as the representative of the God of his people.

What was Isaiah's method of autobiography? Do men solve similar problems in like manner today?

How does this representation of the King and Kingdom correspond with that of Jesus in the Gospels?

How have men successively represented God?

How do the ancient's ideas compare with those of the medieval artists? How does the new school of artists represent

God today? Are most church-window representations true to the ideas of the Gospel?

Second Day: A Parable of a Great Poet.

Let me sing now of my friend,
As my friend sings of his vineyard.
A vineyard had my very dear friend,
On a hill rich and fertile;
He plowed it well and stoned it clean,
And planted the choicest settings.
A watchtower on its top he built,
And hewed out a winepress in it;
Then he awaited good grapes to grow,
But useless fruit it yielded.
Now Yahweh's vineyard is Israel,
And the Judaites his planting;
He awaited right but got might,
And for justice he got deception.

—Isaiah 5: 1-2, 7.

Try to picture this occasion. Forget all modern, western ways and life. Place yourself in the market place of an oriental town. Suddenly the chatter of the people is interrupted by the prophet who comes as a minstrel with his harp. His presence demands silent attention. He pauses, looks about him; then strikes his harp and sings. The theme of the song is familiar to every Palestinian who cannot look about him except to see the hill tops surmounted with vineyards. In each vineyard is a watch tower and the stone walls bear witness to the constant clearing of the ground. The yield of grapes means the livelihood of the owner. Tragedy and starvation await the man who finds himself disappointed in the grapes he grows.

The prophet-singer suddenly turns on his crowd: You are the sour grapes! True to his greatness, he does not tell them what manner of punishment shall be theirs. He, like a wise teacher, leaves that to the imagination of his hearers. The song ceases; he goes as quickly as he came.

What does this song show us as to Isaiah's greatness as a poet? Why did he assume the attitude of a minstrel on this occasion? What was the power of the ending of the song?

Why does the drawing of a moral often spoil an otherwise good story? What is a parable?

Third Day: Isaiah Denounces the Priestly Religion.

Hear Yahweh's message,
You politicians of Sodom;
Listen to our God's teaching,
You people of Gomorrah.

Why do you bring me all your sacrifices?
I am tired of offerings of rams,
Just as I am of the fat of calves,
And blood of bulls and lambs and goats.
I take no pleasure in all these things.
Bring no more vain offerings.
Incense's odor is an abomination to me;
New moon, Sabbath calling the congregation,
Hypocrisy, and assembly I cannot endure.
My soul abhors fasting and solemn meeting;
They are a weary burden to me.

—Isaiah 1: 10-11, 13-14.

Bold words these! Isaiah, true to his prophetic calling, follows Amos and Hosea in denouncing the priestly religion. Think what all this meant to people who considered all this as a "service" to their God. We can imagine how speedily the prophet lost favor with a majority of the people. There is by now, however, a prophetic party; no Amaziah dares to stir up trouble for Isaiah as for Amos. Isaiah, again, is adviser to the king, over whom the priests have little control or influence.

The prophet here criticises the standards of belief and conduct of his day exactly as did Jesus at a later time. In fact, He often referred to Isaiah and seems to have held him as an authority. Was not Jesus accused of breaking the Sabbath? He never offered any sacrifices; He said nothing of incense, nor did He fast. In the "solemn assemblies" He openly repudiated much of the old law and gave in its place *his new way of life,* the Good News, the Gospel.

How do you account for Jesus' resemblance to Isaiah? Compare Amos', Hosea's, and Isaiah's denunciations of the priestly rites. Which is the most severe? Why?

Fourth Day: Song of the Tipplers.

Woe to the crown of the exalted ones, the tipplers of Ephraim,
And to the fading flower of his glorious beauty,
Which is upon the head of those o'ercome with wine.
Behold, the Lord is strong and mighty!
As a tempest of hail, as a violent storm,
As a flood of water overflowing,
Will he cast to the earth with his power.
Under his foot shall be trodden the crown,
The pride of the tipplers of Ephraim.

—Isaiah 28: 1-3.

Here we have Isaiah like his predecessors denouncing the drunkenness of the idle rich. The custom of the banquet had come from Egypt. The prophet gives us a vivid picture. His poem is as sensuous as some of Keats. The laurel wreaths on the heads of the tipplers with their "fading flower" seems very real. The prophet describes a meal such as one might see in any of the great capital cities of Europe. It is a picture of hot life! Such songs have played a big part in the literature of all peoples. We are reminded of Belshazzar's banquet, of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Isaiah uses his song for a very different purpose than Horace.

Behold the Lord, a tempest! All flesh is grass! The Hebrew, unlike the Roman, never forgot the brevity of life. So here, the short life of the wreath on the hot, throbbing brow symbolizes the brevity of life. So Israel soon must pass. How shall this destruction be brought about? The prophet does not tell us. Just as Jesus' disciples came and asked him for explanations, so we may be sure Isaiah's came to him. The context makes it plain that he refers to the Assyrians. Isaiah would teach the people that God alone, the source of power, can help.

How does this poem describe the life of the idle rich in Samaria? What was Isaiah's attitude? Why?

Fifth Day: Fear not, only Believe God.

Thus said Yahweh to me with a heavy hand. He forbade my walking in the way of the people saying:

Say not a conspiracy for all this people call a conspiracy,
Their fear do not fear, nor shall you be afraid.

Yahweh of Hosts, Him shall you name holy.
He shall be your fear, He your dread.

—Isaiah 8: 11-13.

Here we have a picture of the foolish anxiety and fear in the popular folk religion. Demons, circumcision, sacrifice, etc., are all an inheritance from ancient days. The people in the Orient are slaves to fear. Jesus repeatedly assured the people they had nothing to fear. So with the natives today. Fears and superstitions are immortal. From later Judaism and the Arians much of this came into Christianity. Think of the people who fear certain numbers, days of the week (Friday), and a countless number of such inanities. Isaiah was a great man and dared to say such things were foolish. His attack on the priestly ritual and on the folk religion in this passage were two of the greatest moments in his life. Call only God holy! What a startling thought. Yet, how sensible. Isaiah would make God the center of religion. Personality alone is holy. Folk religion and that of the priests held many things holy which to Isaiah and Jesus had absolutely nothing to do with religion.

What was Jesus' allusion to this passage of Isaiah when he commanded the people "Call only One good"?

What changes would necessarily come about in the present-day religious thinking if *personality* alone were made central?

How does Jesus' philosophy dispel fear? What does it put in its place?

Sixth Day: From Isaiah's Catechism for His Disciples.

Now, behold when they say to you,
Ask the spirits of the dead and fortune tellers,
The ones which chirp and twitter.
(You shall answer)
Should not a people seek its God?
On behalf of the living should they go to the dead?
Go to the teaching and the testimony.
If they reply not according to this Word,
Surely there is for them no future.

—Isaiah 8: 19-20.

The early non-literary nabis lived as members of mendicant orders. The father superior trained the younger "sons." With

the coming of the new order of literary prophets, the mendicant orders disappeared from influence. The great prophets had a certain number of disciples, whom they trained by individual, private instruction. Jesus did this same thing with the twelve. How many disciples Isaiah had, we do not know. Most likely the number was small.

As the twelve came to Jesus for instruction in prayer, so the disciples came to Isaiah for instruction as to how to meet the old ideas in the popular folk religion. The prophet tells them to deny any value to the old necromancers, fortune tellers, and mediums. The classic example of such persons was the old woman of En-dor (I Samuel 28). The "chirp and twitter" is the technical term for these replies. All ancient peoples thought of the dead as flitting about as birds.

There can be but one answer to such ideas. Seek God alone. He is the living personality in the universe. How absurd to go to the dead in dank, dark Sheol! How helpless they are; they cannot help. No, go to the teaching of the prophet.

Here, for the first time, Isaiah spoke of his formulated teaching. He commanded his pupils to write these out and learn them when he should send them out. In like manner Jesus sent out the seventy.

What is the original meaning of disciple? How did Socrates' method of teaching compare with Isaiah's?

Read Book XI of the Odyssey for the Greek idea of the activities of the dead. How does it compare with the drama in Isaiah 14? Read also the Babylonian "Descent of Ishtar." What was the Egyptian belief? What are the similarities and differences?

What remnants of this idea have come down to us today?

Seventh Day: The Teacher's Pupils are for Signs and Symbols.

Bind the document, seal the teaching.
I'm waiting for Yahweh who's hiding his face
From Jacob's house. But I have faith in him,
I and the pupils which Yahweh gave me.
Behold, they are for signs and symbols in Israel,
From Yahweh Sabaoth;
Who dwells on Zion's Mount.

—Isaiah 8: 16-18.

Isaiah here speaks of himself as a teacher. His pupils he considers a gift of God. In fact, the greatest joy in the life of a teacher or pastor is to have a pupil who sympathetically understands him. Jesus' joy in the "beloved pupil" is just this. The prophet also regards his pupils as "signs and symbols." Like Hosea, he gave his children symbolic names, that, when they played among the others, they might be constant repetitions of his sermons. This is the ever recurring method of teaching. Actuated by this impulse, the great Swiss reformer, Zwingli, broke up the pictures and removed the cultic signs from the churches.

Isaiah is the first to speak of the experience we call faith. What he means is a submissive trust which has as its corollary complete absence of all kinds of fear.

What is faith? Show that it is a flagrant misuse of the word to apply it to mean creed or sect as when people say, "To what faith do you belong?"

In what sense may the above passage be called the beginning of the church?

What is a sign? What is the use of sign in John's Gospel?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

With Isaiah, prophecy goes again to the Southern Kingdom, Judah. When the young man of Jerusalem beheld his vision and heard his call, his older contemporary, Hosea, was still actively at work in the north. Israel had not yet fallen. In 738, the year of Isaiah's call, Tiglath Pileser IV ruled Assyria. He made four expeditions to the west and claimed to have received tribute from Israel. In 735 the Syro-Ephraimitic war broke out. Isaiah warned Ahaz, the Judean king, against joining the northern allies. Two years later, Tiglath-Pileser came to Palestine again, overran Israel and began a new régime for conquered nations. This was the policy of deportation, and Galilee was the first to suffer. In 727 the great Assyrian died and Shalmaneser V inherited both the throne and the quarrel with Israel. In 725 Samaria was put in a state of siege and in 722 it fell. The glory of its conquest, however, passed to Shalmaneser's successor, Sargon. The chief citizens of the kingdom were deported to Mesopotamia and the warnings of Amos and Hosea justified. During these troublous times, Isaiah began his work which we shall trace in the next chapter.

From the first, the young prophet held before his people the tragedy in the north. He made real and vivid the imminent perils and certain destruction of their national life unless they put God first and forsook absolutely all substitutes.

I

THE MAN HIMSELF

Of the youth of the prophet, we know little. He was born about 760 B.C. in the fifth Olympiad of the Greeks and before the founding of Rome. He was ten years old when Amos delivered his fiery sermons at Bethel, and may have seen the stern Tekoan walking the streets of Jerusalem.

His father gave him the name Yesha'yah, which in the abbreviated form appears Isaiah. The name means *Yahweh is Salvation.* He used his name as his life's text. His father's name was Amos but further than that we know nothing definitely. A late Jewish tradition holds that the young prophet was nephew of King Amaziah. Whether he was related to the royal house or not, from the beginning of his work he exerted a tremendous influence over the policies of the government and always interested himself in politics.

Whether he lived to be an old man and died a natural death or was martyred, we can never know. The last we hear of him is during the reign of Hezekiah. The Jewish tradition, again, fills out his life saying he was martyred under Manasseh, but this tradition is late and similar to that given to other prominent men. The ancients never thought of biography as we do. They were interested in ideas and to these ideas we shall turn.

II

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ISAIAH TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

The earliest nabis fought to keep Yahweh alone on the throne,—the greatest battle in the history of religion and the one that must be continually refought. While the surrounding nations—with the exception of an occasional Egyptian reformer —wallowed in the corrupting influence of different standards of ethics because of polytheism, Israel slowly groped to the acme of human thought, *monotheism.* True, philosophical

monotheism had not yet come; but the character of Yahweh and his difference from Baal, Chemosh, Dagon or any other god received earnest attention from Elijah on.

Amos made a tremendous contribution in declaring Yahweh's ethical imperative as binding on all nations. Hosea tempered Amos' justice with love. Isaiah added to this conception, already the sublimest now known to the ancients, the attribute of *holiness.* The word in Hebrew, *Kadosh,* signifies *remoteness, separateness.* God no longer walked in the cool of the day in his pleasure garden; he no longer visited men nor communed with them physically. He is now enthroned in majestic transcendence before whom beings chant praises. Man has begun to feel his imperfections, his meanness, his insignificance. God is beyond and above all this. To have communion with the Holy One, the young prophet must have all his sin burned away. This is done through God's grace; a supernatural being executes the act. We have now a holy, loving God who demands justice. Later Jesus gave the people the hard and bold command: "You must be as perfect as God is."

This, however, lay latent in Isaiah's own message of the vineyard parable. God expected certain things of Israel. He was harshly and cruelly disappointed. His people have sinned in not making the most of their privileges. "To him that hath" is the greater demand. God had done all things to make a great and prosperous people. He had received the flippant refusal. Yet, in his disappointment, God is no arbitrary and harsh divinity. He demands no cruel sacrifice, as did Chemosh of Moab. Nay, rather, he appeals to the reason of the people.

And now, O citizens of Jerusalem, O men of Judah
Judge, I pray, between me and my vineyard.

And again he pleads:

Come now, let us reason together, says Yahweh.
Though your sins be as scarlet, they can be white as snow;
Though they be red as crimson, they can be as wool but on one condition, *fellowship on the basis of strict morality.*

The prophet is very sure that Yahweh requires no ritual, no burnt offerings, no incense, nor even sacred meetings in his honor. He demands a new way of life, a sympathy of purpose, a cooperation in ideals. Like Amos and Hosea before him, with one blow, he swept away forever the priest and his rite.

III

ISAIAH'S METHOD OF TEACHING

But how is he to propagate his ideas? The common people cannot be shaken loose from their ideas instantly. Have not these same ideas been enunciated before by the Tekoan in Judah and Israel and by the son of Beeri in Israel? Perhaps the false patriotism of his countrymen may bring about the death of the prophet. The ancient method of exterminating ideas was to execute the idealist. So Isaiah chooses disciples. Their number we do not know, nor their former professions, nor their names.

For their instruction, he prepared a catechism, a list of priestly and folk ideas and their refutation. Together with this, he began to formulate his teachings and to dictate them to those who wrote them on pieces of parchment. Armed with this equipment, he sent them out among the towns and into the country villages.

Two hundred years later in India, one Gautama, later called the Buddha, in like manner sent out his order to teach men simple things. Five hundred years after Buddha's countryside evangelism, Jesus taught his little company in Galilee. Twelve hundred years after Jesus, Francis of Assisi likewise sent out men in the manner approved by the Master. No one of these men was interested in writing books. None cared for perpetuation of name or fame. They purposely sought to sink themselves in a great cause. They lived to enshrine their teachings in the hearts of men, believing that a throbbing heart is a better place to safeguard truth than libraries "where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break in and steal."

TOPICS FOR STUDY

What is the continuity of method in teaching from Isaiah to Francis of Assisi? What is the present-day idea?

What are the steps by which Isaiah became conscious of God's call to him? What preparation do you suppose he had previously made?

What are transcendence, holiness? What is the reason for the present-day belief in immanence? How much of all this comes from Isaiah?

What in Isaiah's philosophy is *sin?*

How does sin cut men off from God?

What are the implications of Isaiah's teaching of God's reasonableness and desires for a mutual understanding? What influence from Hosea can you trace in this?

Chapter VII

Isaiah the Statesman, Founder of the Messianic Kingdom

Disappointed with the obduracy of his people, Isaiah cried out,

> How long, O Lord, how long?

The answer came through his bitter experience,

> Until they lie waste—
> Cities without inhabitant,
> Houses without dwellers,
> And the ground, a very desolation!

Convinced that only through long generations of teaching could people develop that god-part, reason, the prophet turned to the future. Throughout the rest of his life, he held before his countrymen the great and glorious ideal of a perfect social order based on cooperation, love of God and man, and strict morality in everyday dealings. Long before, he had denounced the petty superstitions of the folk religion as it ran after wizards and fortune tellers. In severest terms, he declared that God neither desired nor accepted the priestly rites and sacrifices with their holy days.

Why was this Hebrew poet, shortly before 700 B.C., able to outline a way for men to live together which neither the wisdom-loving Greeks, nor the practical Romans were able to surpass; a scheme advocated by Jesus of Nazareth, incorporated into his model prayer and repeated throughout the world by hundreds of nations today? The answer lies in Isaiah's conception of God. His teaching was simple and easily understood, but difficult to live. It is this: God is holy and he demands the same character of his people. How different the Greek Plato: "But we, though we have never seen or rightly conceived a god, imagine an immortal being which has both a soul and a

body, which are united for all time." And this is the acme of Greek theology! Homer's gods are glorified men and women, with all their virtues and vices likewise glorified. Only in the Greek poets do we find anything to help the average man to a better and nobler moral life. Euripides, the noblest of them all, with true prophetic insight cries:

"This is but folly
To think the flight of birds can profit men . . .
'Tis a mere plot to cozen all our lives;
Judgment and Wisdom are the truest seers."

And again in the fire of the Hebrew prophets:

"Unto the eagle all the Heaven is free,
To the noble heart the whole wide earth is home."

Euripides, like the prophets in Israel, found no honor in his own country nor among his kin. He, with Plato and Socrates,—all critics of the old religion,—had to fight the same national disease as in Israel, the superiority complex. Isaiah surpassed them all because of his ethical monotheism and its corollary demand that men be as perfect as their God.

First Day: The Birth of Faith.

And it came to pass in the reign of Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Resin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remeliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to besiege it. They were not able, however, to capture it.

Now when it was reported to the government that Aram had swarmed on Ephraim, the king and his people were agitated like forest trees before the wind. Then Yahweh said to Isaiah:

Go to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Yashub, your son, at the end of the channel of the upper pool on the Fuller's Field Road. Tell him this:

Watch and be quiet, do not be afraid, do not be faint-hearted because of these two burned-out, smoking lamp wicks, the fierce wrath of Resin, Aram, and Remaliah's son. Because Aram has plotted evil against you along with Ephraim and Remaliah's son, planning: Let us go up against Judah and harrass it and let us make a breach therein for us, and let us set up a king in its midst, viz., Tabal's son. Thus says the Lord Yahweh:

It shall not prosper; it shall not be,
Because the capital of Aram is Damascus,
And the chief of Damascus is Resin,
And the capital of Ephraim is Samaria,
And the chief of Samaria is Remaliah's son.
But—if you do not hold fast,
You shall not stand fast.

—Isaiah 7: 1-9.

Isaiah here enters on his career as a statesman. The year is 735, only three years after the call in the temple. His little son's name shows that like Hosea, he felt an impending national calamity. As little Shear-Yashub played among the other children, he continually repeated the refrain of the prophet's hope, *a remnant shall return.*

The immediate occasion of his first recorded visit to Ahaz is given above. Word had just reached the capital that Aram (Syria) and Ephraim (Israel) have allied themselves for the defeat of Tiglath-Pileser IV, the dreaded Assyrian. True to Hebrew style, Aram's making of the alliance is concretely pictured as though it were a hive of bees swarming upon Israel. But two were by no means enough. They sought to secure Judah's allegiance to the allies. This the young king refused. This refusal had been met by an ominous threat, viz., the declaration of war to compel Ahaz's abdication and the setting up of Tabal's son as his successor. No wonder the heart of the king and his subjects fluttered like leaves of a tree before a wind.

Ahaz's desperation is only Isaiah's opportunity. Fear not; only believe in God who is greater than Aram and his allies. In a short time both will be burned out and gone. God alone remains. Neither personal nor national safety can be secured by joining such an alliance; safety comes only from a practical knowledge of God. This understanding banishes fear, brings the quiet of contentment and fellowship based on righteousness. This the prophet sums up in an inimitable word play:

im lo taaminu
ki lo teamenu
(If you are not assured,
You cannot be secured.)

This is the first time anyone spoke of the relation of trust in God as a power of surpassing all evils, fears, and weakness.

It is the beginning of the Gospel's good news:

Fear not, only believe.

This is properly the birth of faith.

Why were the prophets fond of plays on words? Why is it difficult to imitate these expressions in English?

What is the psychological basis of fear? faith? How would Elijah, Amos, or Hosea have met this situation?

Second Day: The Sign, Immanuel.

And Yahweh spoke again to Ahaz, saying: Ask for a sign from Yahweh, your God, from deep down in Sheol or from the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask. I will not tempt Yahweh. Then Isaiah continued: Listen now, O House of David. Is your worrying men such a trifle that you worry my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. See the woman is with child; she shall bear a son and she shall call his name, Immanu-el, i.e., God-is-with-us. Leben[1] and honey shall he eat when he knows how to distinguish good from evil. But, before the boy knows the difference between bad and good, the domain of the two kings you fear so much will be forsaken.—Isaiah 7: 10-16.

The old non-literary nabis worked wonders. From the first literary prophet on, no more miracles appear. These later men used the *sign* as a means of teaching, keeping always before the minds of the people that they have nothing to do with the wonders of the past generations. In fact, they condemned these as witchery and the work of sorcerers. Primitive people, however, are not convinced by logical deductions nor by philosophical postulates. They want to see extraordinary things. Just so, clowns and circus performers are the heroes of the boys and girls. Jesus' own teaching made no impression on many of his own people. They wanted him, like Elijah, to work wonders. He sharply rebuked them declaring: A wicked and adulterous generation seeks a sign. King Ahaz refuses to ask a sign, believing in his own policy of paying tribute and so buying Assyria's protection. He cannot compromise his government with the prophet's religious appeal. He accepts As-

[1] Leben is a preparaton of curdled milk used everywhere in Palestine.

syria's power rather than God's. He fails utterly to understand Isaiah's new teaching of *faith.*

The prophet then proceeds to make plain what he means. The growing power of Assyria will never tolerate the insolence of Aram and Israel. Soon—and here comes the sign. Isaiah refers to a child about to be born. Some scholars think it is Ahaz's son and others a son of the prophet. At any rate, he is to have a symbolic name, Immanu-el, which is Hebrew for, with-us-is-God. Just like Isaiah's other son, Shear-Yashub, he is to be a perpetual sermon. It is the message just given to the king: Have no part in alliances against Assyria. Such policies are suicide. Trust God who is the only real power in the universe. He continues, only wait,—by the time the child is weaned (four or five years old in Palestine), that is when he is old enough to distinguish things that are good to eat, Aram and Israel shall have fallen. Let us see how the events justified the prophet's belief.

At this time, the Assyrian monarch was carrying on a campaign in the north, and this absence gave the allies their start. The next year, however, saw him victorious over his northern foes and again in Syria. Israel would have probably been attacked at once had not its king, Pekah, fallen at the hand of the assassin, Hoshea, who at once consented to Assyrian vassalage. Tiglath-Pileser, however, could not trust him too far and took beautiful Gilead, Galilee, Naphtali (the territory running along the Jordan north to Dan), and several near-by villages. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe Manasseh were deported to Mesopotamia. In 732 Damascus was captured, King Resin killed and the people deported. The little boy, Immanu-el, was now two years old. The sign was accomplished. God was with Judah.

What is a sign? What is the difference between Isaiah's natural sign and Elisha's wonder in II Kings 6:1-7? Why did the literary prophets, John the Baptizer, and Jesus refuse to do wonders? What is the significance of *sign* in John's Gospel? Cf. John 2:11; 10:41.

Third Day: Assyria's Advance and Isaiah's Faith.

He will raise a signal to a nation far off.
And will whistle to it from the end of the earth,
And see, swiftly with haste it comes,
None wearies, none stumbles, none slumbers, none sleeps.

Their roaring is like a lion's mother.
They roar like the lion's cubs,
Yes, they roar and seize their prey
They carry it off and there is no deliverer.
But, with us is God.
Know, O people,
Listen, you of lands far away:
Arm yourselves, but be shattered to pieces!
Arm yourselves, only to be shattered to pieces!
Associate yourselves, it shall come to nought,
Take your pledge, but it shall not endure.
With us is God.

—Isaiah 5:26-27, 29; 8:9-10.

In these two poems the future of Israel and Judah is laid bare with Isaiah's conquering faith. In his concrete and vivid style, he pictures the onrushing army which, all alert and tense, none can stop. Israel and, eventually, Judah will be as helpless as prey in the paws of roaring lions. Under the government's policy of alliances, there can be no deliverer. The only Savior is God. The Immanu-el song is the religious hymn for the prophet's party but it never became the national hymn.

At first sight, it may seem that Ahaz made the proper diplomatic move in accepting the overlordship of Assyria. True, by so doing he staved off Jerusalem's fall for 136 years. But we must not judge by our modern ideas. The loss of national independence meant to Judah the loss of the supremacy of Yahweh. In far-away Assyria another and far different god called Ashur ruled. Now the battle of Elijah and Baal must be fought over again. With the suzerainty of the Assyrian monarch came also that of his god. For Ashur to have supremacy over Yahweh was to Isaiah the most tragic and hopeless of all possibilities. But how different is the gentle Prophet of Jerusalem from the violent Tishbite. He neither advocates slaughter nor fire; instead, he turns to the ideal state of the future when Yahweh shall reign in a regenerated world supreme through his anointed, the Messiah.

What contrast is there between Isaiah and Elijah? What was the difference in character between Ashur and Yahweh? What would have been the probable result if the mass of the people had not held fast to Isaiah's teaching of the moral character of Yahweh? What turned the prophet's attention to the ideal state of the future?

Fourth Day: The Ideal State.

And it shall come to pass in future days,
That the mount of Yahweh's house shall be
Secured on the mountains' top,
And raised up above the hills.
And all nations shall flow into it,
Yes, many peoples shall go and say:
Come, let's ascend to Yahweh's mountain,
And to the house of Jacob's God;
That he may teach us of his ways,
That we may walk in his paths.
For out of Zion instruction goes,
Yes, from Jerusalem, Yahweh's word.
Between the nations shall he decide,
And render judgment for many peoples.
Then shall they change their swords to plows,
And pruning knives shall they make from their spears.
Never again shall there be war among nations,
Never more shall they learn the technique of war,
But each man under his vine shall dwell,
And in his fig tree's shadow evermore secure.

—Isaiah 2: 1-4, Micah 4.

This picture of the future Utopia for Israel is found both in Isaiah and in Micah. The last two lines which really finish the picture are lacking in Isaiah and may have been carelessly omitted by a scribe. It is most likely that neither wrote the song originally, but that it welled up from the people, a folk-song. Both prophets agreed to the sentiment and quoted it as a writer today might quote "America the Beautiful." To the ancients, the idea of plagiarism was unknown and authors' names were never used in quoting.

The sentiments here expressed were born of the disappointment felt by Isaiah when Ahaz forsook his policy and became a vassal of Assyria. The prophet looked on all political alliances as works of iniquity. Only in God could security be found. But his people rejected God; they blindly followed their blind leaders and destruction awaited them. His last hope was to teach men the idyllic state of the future ruled by God.

Only in the distant future would they learn to trust God. Then he would elevate the Hebrew people and from them a super-state would be created. The very existence of this super-state would abolish war, the result of political intrigue. When war has once been abolished, God shall teach all men his ways.

This is the oriental way of saying revealed religion. The Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran, the Buddhist and other sacred classics all have this same idiom. When once the *way* has been learned, Israelites and Gentiles will form a great family, a new kingdom, a kingdom of heaven. Professor Cheyne has well said, "No satraps or Tartans are necessary, for the nations have the full rights of citizenship (Ps. 87), and the only precedence of Israel is that coveted by Milton for England, of 'teaching the nations how to live.'"

The poem ends with the contentment of the peasant farmer. Glad to be rid of war which has ruined him physically and economically, he can live content with his work and take his rest under his vine and fig tree. The style has all the vivid concreteness which marks the inimitable but little appreciated Hebrew poetry.

What is Isaiah's conception of a new social order? Did Jesus' *Kingdom of God* differ from Isaiah's? If so in what respects?

What has Plato's "Republic" in common with Isaiah's Ideal State?

Who are the moderns who desire Ideal States?

Fifth Day: The Rule of the Anointed One.

Those who wander in darkness see a great light,
Those who dwell in Shadow-land are flooded with light.
Exultation hast thou multiplied,
Joy hast thou, too, increased.
They rejoice before thee like harvest joy,
Or as soldiers exult in dividing spoil.
For his burdensome yoke and the collar on his shoulder,
The goad of his driver, hast thou broken as Midian's day;
Then every war boot, and blood stained garment
Shall go to the flame as fuel for fire.
For a boy has been born to us, a son has been given us,
And upon his shoulder is authority. His name is
Wonderful Counsellor, God-like hero, Eternal Father,
Prince of Peace.
Great the authority, peace without end,
On David's throne and in his domain;
To establsh this, to secure it fast in justice and right
Both now and forever will Yahweh do by His might.

—Isaiah 9: 1-6.

In his concrete, vivid style, the prophet pictures the day of salvation, which is none other than the ideal state when all foreign oppressors have gone. National dependence is like the shadow-land of death. With deliverance comes joy like the harvest when peasants give way to the only happiness they know. Israel in servitude has been like an ox; he carried the burden of taxation and the collar of tribute. The Assyrian goaded him along until, as in the case of Midian's oppression (Judges 6-8), God himself gave deliverance. When the divine authority comes in the person of the anointed (Messiah), all implements of war shall be destroyed. The Messiah shall manifest his mission by his character and acts. His name surpasses all heroic names. He is of the House of David and shall inaugurate world peace. This description goes with the preceding. The characteristics are identical.

This ideal burned itself into the heart of the Hebrew people. It made them often impatient. Political enthusiasts arose and were one after the other brutally put down by Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. In Jesus' day, the hatred for tax-collectors (publicans in English Version) surpassed all else. Anyone who consorted with them was considered disloyal to his country. The Gospels show two desires for Jesus. The crowd and part of his disciples wanted him to declare himself a Messiah (political leader). His sharp rebuke to Peter on the road to Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8), forbade any such identification. Again (Mark 12) he told his questioners to pay tribute to Rome. His efforts to teach them the new idea of the *Suffering Servant Messiah* (cf. Ch. XIII) were in vain. The supreme example of irony of history was nailed over his cross. He was crucified as a political agitator, King of the Jews, a rôle he steadfastly sought to avoid. He was misunderstood to the end.

How has the ideal of Isaiah's Messianic King both helped and harmed the Jewish people? Why did Jesus' disciples misunderstand him? Is intense nationalism always blind? Why were tax-collectors hated in Jesus' day? What was his attitude toward them? Was Jesus a nationalist? Has a follower of Jesus any right to identify himself with selfish nationalism?

Sixth Day: The Way to World Peace.

A branch shall come forth from Jesse's stump,
And a shoot from his roots shall bear fruit.
And Yahweh's spirit shall rest upon him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and of power,
The spirit of knowledge in reverence of Yahweh.
From the sight of his eyes shall he not judge,
Nor by the hearing of his ears shall he decide.
But the poor in justice shall he judge,
Yes, decide with equity for the earth's poor.
He will smite the terrifyers with the rod of his mouth,
With the breath of his lips, will he stay the wicked.
And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist,
And faithfulness the girdle about his loins.
Then shall a wolf live with a lamb,
And a leopard shall lie along with a kid;
And a calf and lion cub shall feed together,
And a cow and a bear shall befriend one another.
Their young ones, too, shall lie together.
A lion then like an ox shall eat straw;
And a babe shall play on the den of an asp,
Yes, on a viper's den a babe shall be glad,
For a little child shall guide them.

—Isaiah 11: 1-8.

In rapid, vivid style the prophet throws on the screen a succession of pictures. First, he shows a barren Palestinian hillside with nothing in the sand but a stump. From this apparently dead stump, there suddenly comes forth a branch; it finds nourishment in living roots hidden beyond the dead sands. The second picture: The branch is now a human being, a descendant of David, filled with the divine Spirit. Isaiah conceives of the action of the Spirit differently from previous writers. Formerly it gave physical prowess in battle, power to interpret dreams, or to do some extraordinary thing. Now, it is moralized; the quality of *holiness* enters; the possessor judges *righteously* and in reverence (fear) of God. The Spirit makes the king so different that his garments stand in sharp contrast to that of the old warriors. No more does the king wear a coat of mail, a breastplate and greaves, nor does he carry a sword. The king, possessed by the Spirit, is clad in righteousness and faithfulness; his sword is replaced by his *word*. Reason is enthroned above might. War has been abolished. The third picture shows a

transformed nature. Animals, no longer carnivorous, live at peace with each other and with man as they did in the garden at the beginning. The picture is heightened by the leadership of the child. In Palestine flocks are led, not driven as here. The child, of course, means that the entire social structure has been reversed. Formerly men believed in the mailed fist; they suffered and failed. In the new age innocency, meekness, gentleness shall rule.

This picture, a favorite with Paul (cf. Ephesians 6 and often), and writer of Revelation (cf. 1:16), was continually present in the mind of Jesus. The Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, his teaching against war, and his conception of the new order in the Kingdom, all reflect Isaiah. By his time, it had become an indelible part of the Hebrew people and so a blessed heritage to all the world.

Vergil in his Eclogues gives the Latin view of the Messianic age:

> For he of whom I sing
> Will have a life divine, and as of old
> See kings and heroes with great gods confer,
> Himself their counsel sharing, while he rules
> Like a good father o'er a warless world.
> For tributes at thy birth, O blessed babe,
> The untilled earth with wandering ivies wild
> Shall mingle spikenard, and from bounteous breast
> Pour forth her lilies and Egyptian balm;
> The flock shall come unguided to the fold
> Flowing with milk; nor shall the feeding sheep
> At the huge lion tremble; fragrant flowers
> Shall from thy cradle spring; the viper's brood
> Shall perish, every baneful herb shall fail,
> And orient spices by the wayside bloom.
>
> Vergil, Eclogue 4, 21 ff.
> (Tr. by Way.)

> In robe of white, with awed and wondering eyes
> The threshold of Olympus Daphnis views
> And sees beneath his feet the clouds and stars.
> The eager forests and encircling plains,
> Pan with his shepherds, and the wood-nymphs fair
> In ecstasy rejoice. No wolf intends
> To hurt our flock; no guileful snare
> Threatens the flying deer; for Daphnis' soul
> Was kindly and he wished all creatures peace.

The hill tops sing and lift their heads unshorn
In gladness to the stars; the rocks and woods
Echo the sacred song: "A god is he,
A god, Menalcas!"

Vergil, Eclogue 5, 60 ff.
(Tr. by Way.)

What comparison do you find between the parts of Isaiah and Vergil which are quoted? Do you think the Latin poet had read Isaiah? Compare the Egyptian view in Chapter II of this book. Which of the three is oldest?

What was the Hebrew's conception of all nature's sharing a spiritualized and regenerated human society?

If the great prophets of old and Jesus were right, why has not the church been at all times loyal to the higher teaching?

Seventh Day: The Great Consummation, an Ideal League of Nations.

On that day there shall be a street from Egypt to Assyria. Then shall the Assyrian enter Egypt and the Egyptian enter Assyria; and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians. In that day Israel shall be a third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth which Yahweh Sabaoth blessed saying:

Blessed are my people, the Egyptians,
And my handiwork, the Assyrians,
And my inheritance, Israel.

—Isaiah 19:23-25.

A Messiah for Assyria and for Egypt! Never before had any of the sons of men thought of unlimited cooperation in unselfish helpfulness. All shall worship together, united in the prophetic prerogative of a new humanitarianism based on strict morality. A noble thought! The three ancient rivals, the wolf and adder and the lamb all converted to one ideal! Why not? But,—the elimination of a racial complex, or a credal complex, or a superiority complex means death for martyrs and time without end. The Gospel proclaims this ideal as possible. In Jesus' own life it worked. But a month after his crucifixion, these old evils were at work. Peter strove with Paul; the Judaists quarreled with the Hellenists and the Good News of the Master had to wait. It waits yet while present-day Egyptians quarrel with their neighbors the Assyrians and each has

his quarrel with Israel—(although today they are known by other names!). But the truth must conquer! Isaiah, Jesus, and a great host of loyal disciples have not lived in vain.

How does Isaiah's doctrine of the Messianic future state naturally culminate in the nations joined together for the same ends? Who have been disciples of Isaiah down through the ages? In what way does ignorance keep people and institutions apart today? What is the basis for cooperative fellowship among nations in Isaiah's teaching? In Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of God how does cooperation come about?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

We have studied passages illustrating the trend of Isaiah's teaching. The old man, after a well-lived life, went down to his grave believing in the inherent goodness in man and in the assurance of future social order in which all men should live together as sons of one holy God.

I

The element which buoyed this man up for forty difficult years was his sense of the holiness and justice of God. Believe God. Never fear nor doubt. He and his way must conquer. That is what we call faith and in Isaiah's sermons it came to men as never before. Here individualism begins to come to the front to be carried on by Jeremiah. The storm and stress of souls as well as nations become more and more a solicitude with God.

This personal assurance that salvation for his people could come only from God led Isaiah to give signs as proofs. Like Hosea before him, he gave his children symbolic names. One son he called Shear-Yashub, Remnant-shall-return; another son he called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, Haste-spoil-speed-booty. His faith was justified. The Assyrians, in whom the government trusted, carried Israel away and Judah lingered on as a mouse in the power of a cat. The sign Immanu-el, another boy, has already been studied. This boy, perhaps the prophet's or the king's son, preached a perpetual sermon to the king declaring that Ephraim and Syria were as nothing to be feared so long as one trusted God.

Chapter twenty tells another sign of the prophet. The children were now growing to man's estate. Wherever they went,

the people were reminded of the folly of their ways. To add to this, Isaiah for three years lived as an exile, going about barefoot and only scantily clad. He put into practice the desire of the sage who said: "What you do speaks so loudly, I cannot hear what you say." This way of teaching by pantomime, Jeremiah took up as did Ezekiel after him. Each of these men did what they did because they believed. Jesus demanded this same implicit confidence in those whom he would help.

The following passages sum up Isaiah's teaching on faith:

If you are not assured,
You cannot be secured.—7:9.

He who believes shall not make haste.—28:16.

The Greek version perhaps more correctly reads:

He who believes shall not be ashamed.

For thus says the Lord God, Israel's Holy One:
Through conversion and rest shall you be saved
In quietness and confidence will be your strength.—30:15.

This teaching forms one of the greatest contributions made by any prophet to the philosophy of religion.

II

THE TEACHING OF THE MESSIAH

All ancient peoples told tales of "the good, old times" and dreamed of their return. Never content, they compared the present with the ideal and built utopias. The earlier forms of this ideal state were to be ruled by a king; later developments adopted current notions of government and so we have Plato's "Republic."

The Old Testament Utopia is known as the Messianic age. The Messiah is the ideal king who shall rule under the direction of, and by appointment from, Yahweh, Israel's God. The term Messiah means in Hebrew simply *anointed* and comes from the fact that the early method of coronation was by pouring oil on the head, anointing.

Since the days of Saul, the first king, the government had been a distasteful and precarious institution. The old nomadic ideal ruled in the hearts of the people. They could see no reason why each man should not do what was right in his own eyes and why he should be burdened with royalty and taxes.

Amos and Hosea denounced the kings and their governments but did not seek to abolish the institution. Isaiah, the Plato of the Hebrews, took up the subject of the ideal king and the ideal government, i.e., the Messianic king and the Messianic age.

The first thing to be noted is the fact that the Messiah is to be a political ruler. He is to redeem the people from oppression, relieve them of forced tribute, and reverse the old order in the earliest conception by making them rule over the Gentiles. His rule is thought of at first as national, not universal. This can only be accomplished by one anointed not from men but from Yahweh, himself. He is to be merely his agent and after the exile this idea grew to the extent that a Gentile, Cyrus the Persian, was given the title because he seemed to be doing Yahweh's will. When it came to picturing the person of the Messiah himself, it was only natural to turn to the greatest Hebrew hero. This was none other than David. Had he not conquered Israel's enemies? Had he not secured Jerusalem and made it "the city of the Great King"? Had he not been the first to inaugurate an oriental court in all its gorgeous effulgence? The ideal king certainly must be like him. Isaiah declares that he will come from David's family:

> There will come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse,
> And a scion from his roots will bear fruit.

This was doubtless the common everyday belief of the people. Isaiah, however, recreated and moralized the belief. He put it above and beyond the mere nationalism and political desires of his contemporaries. The ideal king shall rule under divine guidance.

> The spirit of Yahweh will rest on him,
> A spirit of wisdom and discernment,
> A spirit of counsel and power,
> A spirit of knowledge and reverence for Yahweh.

The idea of the spirit's activity was old. Saul, influenced by the spirit, had wrought victory for Israel; he had behaved as a nabi, and had achieved great and heroic prowess. The activity of the spirit was entirely *physical*. It made great athletes of otherwise ordinary mortals; it brought victory to armies and slaughter to the vanquished. With Isaiah's teaching, however, the spirit is moralized. It no longer has a physical sense. It means unselfish cooperation, a reasonable service, and the end

of all war. A radical change from the days of Gideon and Saul to Isaiah! So Jesus' teaching of the spirit declared it to be God himself in men. The spirit "shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I told you." The spirit is the prompter of the Gospel and is of the same character as God, himself.

Just so Jesus' conception of the new social order, which he called the Kingdom of God, was to be actuated and controlled by the spirit. In this new age war should be no more. Men should love their enemies; and by loving them find they were really not enemies at all. Cooperation, in the spirit of Jesus, should supersede the old plans of life and all should live together under the Messianic constitution:

Be perfect as God is perfect.

This is the program which the church has as yet failed to make real to a suffering world.

III

The prophetic philosophy of history finds its best expression in Isaiah. True to the teaching of his predecessors, Amos and Hosea, he declared that national security depends on doing *mishpat* (all that God requires of a man is the moral life). This word, as has been pointed out, loses its force in the English rendering by *Justice*. This divine law cannot be abrogated, nor can it be altered. This idea had been latent in Elijah's war on Baalism under Ahab. The old nabi, however, himself failed both perfectly to understand it and to practice it. Nevertheless, this germ, inherent in Israel's religion, found leaf in Amos and full fruit in Isaiah. This is the glory of the Old Testament.

This divine, necessary, and immutable law was conceived of at first to apply to Israel alone. Amos broke with nationalism and declared that states and nations must observe this as well as men. Isaiah took this law after Hosea had tempered it with love, and showed how nations *could* do this to justify the *must* of Amos.

The next great move forward is found in the book of Deuteronomy which is the recodifying of the law under the influence of the prophets before Jeremiah, i.e., up to 626 B.C. This book will be considered in its chronological order. The thesis is this: National and civil *mishpat* must be practiced by Israel because he has been allowed to live in Yahweh's land. If this

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command continued to be disobeyed, expulsion must result. This every prophet declared. Isaiah's two sons proclaimed daily this, their father's message. The one, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, repeated the expulsion; the other, Shear-Yashub, assured the people of Isaiah's undying belief in human nature. From this time on, "a remnant shall return," cheered the checkered life of the people. The modern Zionist movement is the present-day form of Isaiah's faith.

The teaching that success and strict morality (*mishpat*) are dependent on each other was new to the people. It meant a violent break with folk religion, which held to supernatural signs, omens, wizard's oracles, charms, and control of spirits; and it meant an equally violent break with priestly religion, which believed security lay in fulfilling with inerrant accuracy a ritual with the attendant sacrifices and holy days. The world yet finds itself in the throes of this same struggle.

Events which came thick and fast subjected the teaching of the prophets to the acid test. No prophet had an easy time. Few were converted. As late as 500 we find the author of the drama, Job, threshing out the problem. Isaiah felt this as keenly as did this author, and each sought to justify the ways of God. The prophet found encouragement in the ideal, Messianic state; the solution of the dramatist developed into the ideal *post-mortem* happiness of the individual who shall thus receive his reward for practicing *mishpat*. From the fall of Israel in 722 the hope of restoration grew; with the fall of Jerusalem in 586, this hope inspired the greatest and sublimest poems of the prophets.

IV

ISAIAH IN MUSLIM THEOLOGY

Like Hosea, Isaiah ranks high with the Muslim peoples. The missionary must give consideration to this fact; and should be able to use his prophecies in teaching the people. Of course, the old idea that all in any religion is false has gone, never to return. Some of the church fathers' exegesis parallels that of the Muslim fathers. Each believes in the inspiration of the teaching of his book. An example or two will give us the approach to the Muslim's view of Isaiah's prophecies.

"And he—peace be with him—said in the fifth chapter, in explanation of his preceding prophecies: 'The nation which was

in darkness saw a resplendent light,'" etc. (9:2-4 is quoted). "This resembles the description which the Most High God gave in the Kur'an about the Prophet (i.e., *Muhammed*)—may God bless and save him—saying: 'And he will ease them of their burden and of the yokes which were upon them.' See—may God guide you—and examine who is he who has broken the yoke from the children of Ishmael, destroyed the power of the enemies, and bruised the rod of the mighty. Has that light shone on anyone except on the dwellers in that dark desert of the pagan posterity of Ishmael?"

"And he said in this chapter: 'Unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given, whose government is on his shoulder' (9:6). He means by that 'his prophecy is on his shoulder.' . . . but in Hebrew it is said, 'The sign of prophecy is on his shoulder.' This is what the Muslims call the 'seal of prophecy.' This is, therefore, a clear allusion to the portraiture of the Prophet (i.e., *Muhammed*)—may God bless and save him—and a reference to his face and his moles."

The early Christian exegetes found in these passages references to Jesus as the Muslims do to Muhammed. The identical use of Isaiah by both Muslims and Christians makes an interesting as well as perplexing situation for the Christian missionary. The problem, however, is by no means insoluble. Orthodox Judaism would give a different exegesis. When we calmly find the reason for each interpretation, we are in a position to clarify the thinking of each. Our next step must be to develop our *historical sense* (an indispensable requirement for any biblical work) and find out just what Isaiah meant. Christian, Jew, and Muslim all alike recognize certain things as evidence. From this we can proceed to an agreeable understanding among the three great religions, which, one and all, revere Isaiah as the great prophet.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

I. Isaiah, the man himself.
   1. What do we know of the prophet's boyhood, and early manhood? What was his probable education?
   2. What do we know of his family life? Why did he give his children symbolic names?

II. Isaiah's contribution to religion.
   1. What was his conception of (a) God's holiness, (b) faith?

2. What was his philosophy of history? In what sense was Isaiah here original? What do you understand by prophetic originality?

III. The Messiah and the Messianic age.

1. What was the probable popular Hebrew conception when Isaiah began his prophetic activity? What does Micah reflect of this?
2. What does the word Messiah mean originally? How did the Septuagint (LXX) translate the word? In what form does it appear in the New Testament?
3. What are the characteristics of Isaiah's ideal, future (Messianic) state? Do you find any parallels in other national literature?
4. In what sense can Jesus be called Messiah? Explain Mark 8:27-37.

IV. Isaiah in the three great religions.

1. How do the Muslims regard Isaiah? What problem does this present to the Christian missionary? How can it be solved?
2. In what way do orthodox Jews and Christians differ in their interpretation of Isaiah? What is the test of truth in these matters?

Chapter VIII

Micah, Zephaniah, and Deuteronomy

Isaiah had a great contemporary in the person of Micah, a man from the ancient town of Moresheth on the border of the Philistine plain. Like Isaiah, Micah was interested in the future golden age. In 5:2 he predicted the birth of the great king in David's own town, Bethlehem. He incorporated into his book the same hymn of peace that we find in Isaiah, and like the former he felt that Jerusalem must go the way of Samaria.

Like Amos, Micah took up the cause of the poor. His was the first voice to be raised against child labor, a crime even more deadly in the east than in the west. Like all his predecessors he attacked the popular priestly cult, declaring that all beyond a strictly moral life is an abomination to God.

Micah probably supervised the collection of his oracles. His book is divided usually into three parts. The first division, chapters 1-3, gives a series of sermons on sin and its necessary result. Here the style and thought of the prophet are seen at their best. Chapters 4-5, the second part, contain a ray of hope which shall eventually come to a people purged of all their unrighteousness. Chapters 6-7 sum up all he has said and repeat that sin and all unjust ways reap their own reward, but beyond all this is hope in a good God.

Like all the other literary prophets, Micah was a great poet. It is true that his poems, for the most part, deal with the themes of his predecessors but he was by no means to Isaiah what Elisha was to Elijah or Vergil to Homer. He is more like Francis of Assisi. Both were villagers who loved their country glens; both breathed out God-intoxicated messages from hearts quivering with emotion. Like the Assisan, Micah felt sent to the leaders of the day as well as to the peasants, and so dared to stand alone amid insults which accompany an unpopular cause.

A popular notion in the folk religion of the time was the inviolability of Jerusalem. Isaiah mildly denounced this belief but Micah first predicted the complete destruction of the city without being severely persecuted. Nationalism, however, grew, and when Jeremiah years later attacked this idea he was brutally imprisoned. At the trial for his life things looked bad when suddenly his advocate referred, as any modern lawyer might, to the decision in Micah's case. The latter prophet, the court was told, taught the same thing, and his life was not taken. Jeremiah was accordingly acquitted. This is the only case where one prophet is quoted as an authority in the trial of another.

DAILY READINGS

First Day: Political and Religious Scandals at the Capital.

For Jacob's transgression is all this,
Yes, it is for Israel's sins.
But what is the sin of Jacob?
Is it not Samaria?
And what is the sin of Jacob?
Is it not Jerusalem?

. . . . .

Listen now, you rulers of Jacob
Also you, elders of Israel.
You who reject justice,
And make crooked all that is straight.
You who build Zion on blood,
And Jerusalem on iniquity.

Its judges give verdicts for a bribe,
Its priests give decisions for money,
Its prophets give messages for silver,
Yet they lean on Yahweh, saying:
Is not Yahweh in our midst?
No evil can come upon us.
Therefore, from your own fault
Zion like a field shall be plowed;
Jerusalem shall become a ruin,
And Temple Hill a forest shrine.

—Micah 1:5; 3:9-12.

In this poem, Micah sums up the social iniquity of both Israel and Judah. Like all the prophets he blames the cities (here the capitals) for being the ringleaders in injustice and fraud. The conspiracies and plots eat like cancer into the civil rulers, the priests of the established religion and even the prophets have succumbed. The times pictured here resemble Italy in the time of Savonarola and Europe in the time of Luther.

In the midst of all corruption, the priests and prophets who try to "serve God and Mammon" appeal to the prejudices of the folk religion. God is in our midst, i.e., Jerusalem is invulnerable. Micah holds that their own blindness is their sin. They utterly misunderstand God. He has no favorites nor will he be cajoled by pious phrases. He demands *mishpat* (justice); and the very leaders are bringing destruction upon their heads and those of their followers. For the first time this plain speaker declares that Jerusalem shall be utterly destroyed.

Only an oriental could understand the awfulness of this prophecy. Had they not heard the tales of Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Hittite, and countless other cities falling before a conqueror? Had not travelers from distant shores related the fate of great cities being turned into stone piles or being plowed and sowed with salt? The common peasant held his God to be a protection against all this. Micah tells him only on one condition will God save a city. That condition is the practice of justice by every inhabitant, even unto the least.

What were the different standards of morality in the time of Micah? How did he attempt to unify these?

In what sense were Savonarola and Luther modern Micahs?

Why did the threat of Jerusalem's destruction mean something vastly different to a contemporary of Micah than the same thing would mean to a modern man?

Why are all classes at times corrupted by money?

Second Day: The First Protest against Child Labor.

Woe to those who plot iniquity,
And devise evil even in bed.
In the light of morning they execute it,
Because it is in the power of their hands.

Then they covet fields and seize them,
And houses, too, and take them away;
And they oppress a man and his family,
Yes, a man and his heritage.

. . . . . .

The women of my people you drive away
From the homes which they loved.
From their children you take away
My glory for ever and ever.

—Micah 2:1-2, 9.

Israel, even as Rome, had its agrarian troubles. The small farmers of Moresheth gradually found their lands swallowed up by the wealthy landlords. This condition had gone on for some time, and now Micah attacked the evil with all his youthful vigor. He did this because his own friends and relatives were among the sufferers. One has only to see Micah's pleasant valley and the olive-clad hills to appreciate the peasant's love for "his heritage." His picture is very vivid. The rich men spend not only the day but also the night plotting to rob the poor. Early in the morning they put into operation the plans thought out at night, "because it is in the power of their hands." Professor Duhm renders the last phrase "because their God is their fist." The idea is the same. They plunder because they are in a position to. They gather in fields and houses as a result of their covetousness. The desire, greed, is father to the act. To deprive a peasant farmer of his acres was a serious crime in the eyes of a Hebrew. Farms passed from father to son with something of a holy sanction.

This greed of the rich exceeds all bounds in Micah's eyes. Women with their babes are sent out homeless to eke out an existence practically as slaves. This heinous sin violates everything the prophets held sacred. The little children lose all that childhood should mean to them. The prophet calls this the *glory of God,* a fine description of a little child who can live a normal life. One sees a repetition of Micah's sad picture today in the refugees throughout the country from Constantinople to Damascus. Little girls and boys work for a few pennies a day weaving costly rugs and hammering beautiful brass plates. American people, while admiring the beauty of these things, little realize the life blood of the thousands of little lives they represent.

What has Christianity done to alleviate the old sin of child labor? How is child labor the result of a certain economic order? What was Jesus' attitude toward children?

Why does an accumulation of riches usually go hand in hand with growing greed?

Third Day: The First Definition of True Religion.

The worshiper asks:

With what shall I come before Yahweh,
How shall I bow before God most high?
Shall I bring to him burnt offerings,
Or calves only a year old?
Will Yahweh be pleased with a thousand rams,
Or with ten thousand streams of oil?
Shall I give him my first son for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

The prophet replies:

He has told you what is good, O man,
What Yahweh wishes from you is
Merely to do justly, love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God.

—Micah 6: 6-8.

Micah, in this inspired answer to a troubled soul, has given the world the one perfect definition of practical, everyday religion. This and this alone will characterize the religion of the future. Note the rising of the despair in the heart of the questioner. Ordinary burnt offerings bring no peace of mind; perhaps God requires the most beloved, the thing that makes life worth living. Who knows what will bring comfort to a troubled soul? Thousands of men and women who go up and down the highways of life ask this question daily. To the Palestinian the best beloved was the first born son. In times of despair he was sacrificed. Witness the sacrifice of the sons of Ahaz (*2* Kings 16: 3 ff.), King of Judah 735-720; that of Manasseh (*2* Kings *21*: *2* ff.), King of Judah 692-638, and that of Mesha of Moab (*2* Kings 3: *27*). The literary prophets protested against human sacrifice. Their efforts brought forth fruit in the teaching of Genesis *22* and in the legal prohibition of the terrible custom in Leviticus 18: *21* and *20*: *2*. Were it not for the Hebrew prophets, probably a great part of the hu-

man race would to this day believe it could touch the heart of God only in this barbarous way.

The whole tenor of Micah's answer is one of tender campassion. He loved his people and his heart went out to those who longed to have God's blessing. It is difficult for most westerners to feel the agony in the soul of the questioner here. The oriental is and has ever been far more deeply religious than the occidental. The yearning emotion Micah tries to direct to the true character of God which desires only a humble, gentle, moral life. Jesus' summary of his way of life in the Beatitudes is the same. What a debt of gratitude we owe to Micah! Yet this great soul is practically unknown.

Why do modern Americans express their religious zeal differently from the people of Micah's day? How did Micah answer a bewildered man yearning for fellowship with God?

What is your definition of religion? Why is it impossible to define religion *per se?* How does the classification *folk, priestly,* and *prophetic* religion make it possible to define religion? Which of these three elements has predominance in your own personal religion? Can you call yourself a follower of Micah?

Fourth Day: Bethlehem to Give the World a Messiah.

Thou Bethlehem, Ephrath,
Insignificant among Judah's clans,
From you shall go forth Israel's ruler,
Whose origin is from days of old.

. . . . .

He shall stand as shepherd in the strength of Yahweh,
In the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God;
And his greatness shall abide at the ends of the earth,
Then shall there be the longed for peace.

—Micah 5:1, 3-4a.

We have here the consummation of Messianic teaching. From Micah's time the ideal became ever more and more national and local. Vengeance crept into the hearts of the people as they felt the burden of the foreign rulers until we have the terrible picture of militarism with revenge and hate given in the Second Psalm. Compare Psalm 2:8-9,

Ask me and I will give nations for your heritage,
And as your possession, the ends of the earth.
You shall break them with a rod of iron,
Like a potter's vessel you shall dash them to pieces,

with the idyllic pictures of the future golden age of Isaiah and Micah. No one would think of comparing the later Messianic passages with Jesus' conception of his Kingdom of world peace, while Isaiah and Micah forever will soothe the troubled heart of the human race.

How does Micah supplement the picture of the golden age of peace as given by Isaiah? Why did Micah select Bethlehem as the home of the future Messiah? Why did the Messianic conception lose its power when the Israelites and Judaites were carried into captivity? What events in world history parallel the revenge expressed in Psalm 2?

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah was a younger contemporary of Micah and Jeremiah. The preface to his book tells us that his father's name was Hezekiah and that his period of activity synchronized with the reign of Josiah (637-607). His little book was probably put into form in 626, five years before the reform of Deuteronomy. All scholars believe Zephaniah was moved to prophecy by the onrush of the wild hordes of Scythians who ravished the Mediterranean shores as far south as the Judean desert in 626. Zephaniah took the old theme of the Day of Yahweh, but he has universalized the conception. This book pictures a final judgment which every great world catastrophe renews in the hearts of mankind.

Fifth Day: The Doom of Philistia, Ethiopia, and Assyria.

Assemble together, yes assemble,
O nation unashamed.
Before you pass into dust,
Or as chaff that passes in a day,
Before there come upon you
The burning anger of Yahweh.
For Gaza shall be deserted,
And Ashkelon a desolation shall be.

Ashdod at high noon shall be deported,
Ekron, too, shall be uprooted.
Woe to the coast-land dwellers,
O nation of Cherethites.
This sentence of Yahweh is upon you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines:
Verily I will you to perish
Without inhabitant;
Sea coast pastures for shepherds,
Yes, you shall be folds for sheep,
Property of the remnant of Judah,
To be used as a pasture ground.
In Ashkelon's houses even,
They shall camp at evening time;
For Yahweh, God, shall visit them,
And upon them bring captivity.

Alas for you too, Ethiopia!
Slain by my sword, says Yahweh
Then to the north goes his power,
Assyria, too, shall fall.
Nineveh shall he change to a desert,
Parched like a wilderness;
And herds shall stable within her,
As well as all beasts of the land.
And the bittern and also the pelican
Among her columns shall roost;
The owl will hoot from the window,
The raven above the door.

—Zephaniah 2:1-2, 4-7, 12-14.

In this remarkable poem Zephaniah predicts the destruction of the Philistines, Ethiopians, and Assyrians, all traditional enemies of Israel. It is a variety of hymn of destruction that always found a ready response in the hearts of a subjected people. The prophet's hearers easily and readily supplied all the reasons for this old hatred which he can here omit. The longer part of the poem is devoted to Philistia as she was the oldest enemy. Long before the days of Saul and David, Israel had suffered at her hands. At last the *day of Yahweh* will bring a reversal of events. Philistia will be ground into dust. The idea may be compared to the messianic war pictured in Psalm 2 and it is possible that the prophet had the activity of the Messiah in mind. He does not mention him, however, and

it is very probable that he thought of an eschatological end of this nation. The terrible anger of God figures both in the late messianic militarism and in the later eschatology.

The prophet mentions the important cities, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. The first of these met its fate early. The story of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26 ff. contains a note to the effect that at that time (c. 35 A.D.) the town was deserted. Ashkelon lived on for more than 1200 years; Ashdod survived not so long but is famous in history as having outlived one of the longest sieges ever imposed on a city. Herodotus tells a long story of Ashdod. Ekron soon fell. Gath, another famous town often mentioned in history, had by this time become a proverb; the prophet omits even a reference to it.

The prophet gives the origin of the Philistines as does Amos,[1] i.e., from Crete. Herodotus also mentions them as of this origin. The subject is being studied carefully at the present time by the American and British schools in Jerusalem. Canaan and Philistia are geographical synonyms. It is interesting that the Philistines gave us the present name of Palestine.

Zephaniah closes his poem by painting a vivid pastoral scene where once stood flourishing cities. It is as though someone should say the Atlantic coast cities should become pastures. Such pictures are common to orientals, deserted cities being by no means a rare sight. The vividness here rises to a great height when he says that great houses shall become lonely sheep pens.

Ethiopia finds scarcely more than a mention. The poet introduces it to show the great extent of the terrible Scythian scourge. Way beyond Egypt shall the power of the God of Israel be felt as he uses these barbarians for his scourge! It is probable that the prophet means the Egyptians to be included as the Ethiopians had been masters of Egypt till about the time of his birth.

Zephaniah now turns to Assyria, the feared, hated, and the most powerful government of his time. Nineveh had been the capital for about 200 years and its fame had gone throughout the earth. Sennacherib, the great king, had rebuilt it to eclipse the fame of ancient Babylon. The book of Jonah reflects the importance of the great city. This was Zephaniah's most dar-

[1] Cf. Ch. IV, page 41.

ing prediction. "Nineveh shall be changed to a desert" meant the destruction of the two rivers as well as the great system of irrigation canals. The city's gardens yet charm the poetic fancy. Nineveh's becoming a desert was like the fading of Carmel. Like Philistia, Assyria shall become a pasture. The vivid imagination of the prophet reaches its climax in the picture of unclean birds nesting among the fallen columns, while the owl and raven hoot and croak out the death knell.

The prophet's terrible prediction speedily came true. In 606 the great city fell. Zephaniah had passed from this world but his successor Nahum has left us a great poem about the astonishment that came to the world. From that day to the modern moving picture, the theme of the fall of Nineveh has never ceased to thrill all mankind.

What elements entered into Zephaniah's assurance that God would surely destroy the great powers of his time? Why has Nineveh's dramatic history more charm to the average person than Philistia's? Why is a knowledge of history necessary to a proper understanding of Zephaniah? What are some common errors deduced from reading any of the prophets without a historical sense?

Sixth Day: The Prophetic Revision of the Law.

It was now time for the work of the literary prophets to bear fruit. This actually came when the second and revised editions of the Law (Torah) was given to the world in 621, during the reign of the popular King, Josiah. In this book we again hear Amos and Micah demand justice; Hosea pleads for love; and Isaiah beseeches the people to be holy like their God.

Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh only. So you must love Yahweh your God with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your strength.

Also these precepts which I today command you on your heart. Teach them to your children, talk about them at home, while you are journeying on the road, while you are in bed, and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand, and let them be a headdress between your eyes. Write them on the doors of your house and on your gates.

—Deuteronomy 6: 4-9.

This sums up the law according to the prophets. This passage is also the Shema, the creed of Synagog and Temple today. Theoretically, at least, all Christians and Jews unite here to worship the one and only God. Note that this brief creed lacks every trace of folk and priestly religion. This is the reason that it is the only universal creed. It cannot be too often repeated that the pure monotheism here expressed is the loftiest height to which the mind of man has yet attained. Every deeply religious soul must respond to this beautiful creed.

What have modern Jews and modern Christians in common? What was the ancient Hebrew threefold division of the whole man? What modern organization has so effectively emphasized the triune nature of man?

Seventh Day: The Office of the Prophet.

Now the prophet, who shall boast about speaking a message in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or a prophet who shall speak in the name of other gods, must be put to death.

And when you are in doubt how you shall know which message Yahweh did not command (let this decide): If the prophet speaks something in Yahweh's name and the thing is not so nor comes to pass, than Yahweh has not spoken it; but in boastfulness the prophet spoke it. Have no fear of him (i.e., such a prophet).—Deuteronomy 18: 20-22.

Since the days when Amos felt the necessity of defending his reputation against the charge of being a member of the mendicant order of nabis, the necessity of a true prophet's credentials became ever more apparent. In most violent terms Micah had denounced the clever politician who masqueraded as a spokesman of Yahweh. The type grew ever more prevalent. The office of prophet was in danger of losing its moral power. Jeremiah's life especially was made miserable by "false prophets," but long before his time we find Zedekiah and Micaiah ben Imlah in the same struggle (I Kings 22), cf. Jeremiah 6: 13 f., 14: 13 ff. et al. True to the spirit of the whole book, the Deuteronomist denounces also the prophet of any *other* divinity. As we have already seen, every religion had its spokesmen; each religion claimed divine authority for its prophets on the ground of divine inspiration.

The following test was accordingly given: (1) The prophet must speak *only* in the name of the God of Israel. (2) The events must shortly show that his political and religious insight are to be trusted. The prophet who proved to be false must be shown no regard nor reverence. He must go the way of the liar.

This problem loomed large in Jesus' day. He repeatedly warned the disciples against false prophets and false messiahs. Mark 13 sums up Jesus' prediction of the result of this "blind guide" leadership. His prediction proved true. Jerusalem fell never more to come to the Jews. The wailing wall today is a mute testimony to the work of the false, political enthusiasts who recklessly ruined their own people.

Who in our society today may be likened to false prophets? Who were the first thinkers to make the *character test?*

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

Micah, unlike his contemporary Isaiah, concerned himself little with foreign affairs. He desired to set Israel's house right, to give the people a true conception of their great God, and to make judges, priests, and prophets righteous. His soul burned within him as he saw peasants pushed from their homes by greedy landlords; he felt this the more keenly because nature especially blessed with water and fertility the region around Maressa (now called Beit Jibrin). In order the better to understand this great man, to see him as he was, let us take a visit to his home.

I

A VISIT TO THE HOME OF MICAH

We reached the Jaffa Gate, Jerusalem, at 3:15 in the afternoon of May first, exactly as the clock was striking nine, Arabic time. The day had been excessively hot, but about two o'clock it began to cloud over and became somewhat cooler. At the Jaffa Gate we bargained for an automobile to take us to Hebron from whence we had to make our way to Beit Jibrin.

The road from Jerusalem to Hebron skirts Rachel's tomb and passes through Bethlehem with all its sacred associations. Soon after Solomon's Pools are passed on the left and we come to Philip's spring. Tradition has it that here in this spring, the

treasurer of Candace of Ethiopia was received into the body of Christians. Just before reaching Hebron we stop to see the old sanctuary of Mamre, venerable as Abraham. The whole region looks prosperous with its rich vine culture.

We passed the night at Hebron where we found a fairly good inn under Jewish management though the city is ardently Muslim. Hebron at night presents a brilliant spectacle. The Great Mosque, the burial place of the patriarchs, is a blaze of lights while a smaller mosque also is lighted in honor of Ramadan (the Muslim month of daytime fasting). The gun had been fired at 6:30, sunset, and immediately after all the streets became empty except for a few Jews and careless Muslims. We spent a part of the evening bargaining in Arabic for horses for the journey next morning. Our guide faithfully promised to be ready to start at five which meant 7:30. We were glad to be off for Micah's home.

After leaving the city the road passes through large terraced vineyards. The Russian church and Abraham's tree are left on the right. Near by is Beit Iskalul, the Eschol of the Old Testament. The modern name is the Arabic equivalent of the Hebrew Eschol, which means *grape*. The story of the famous cluster and the origin of the name of the place is told in Numbers 13:23 ff. A broad view extends to the sea. The spies from Eschol certainly had a fine extensive view of the plain. At some distance farther on we enter the fine, wide Wadi (Valley) el-Merj. Here Micah saw the wealthy landlords concerning whom he speaks. Here, too, occurred the child labor which to this day outrages our sense of justice for children. Signs of ancient terracing show us that in the ancient days these hills were the scene of great prosperity. From this valley only the sky and its sides are visible. The old road in the middle once, too, formed the chief highway from Jerusalem, via Gaza, into Egypt. One half hour from Beit Jibrin, we pass a village "set on a hill" at the base of which thrive many olive trees. Cattle, donkeys, goats, camels, all point to peasant prosperity.

We pass an old Muslim cemetery and enter the modern native village. It has the marks of fertility, being fringed with olive orchards. Passing through the village, we came to the 'ain (spring) from which the prophet many times quenched his thirst; then we proceeded to the caves. These are the most famous in all Palestine, being the only painted ones. They have been more or less inhabited since the days of the "cave

men." The old town is near by and presents an imposing tell (i.e., mound of an ancient city). Near by is a deep well hewn into a cavern. Steps descend from a small opening, the whole being cut into the rock. The peasant's regard for water is shown by the fact that only a bit of muddy water was in the well but our guide insisted that it was "very good." The tell of Maressa rivals Megiddo and is a veritable paradise of potsherds. The view is magnificent. The prophet looked west on the Mediterranean, on the east he saw the hills of Hebron. Certainly, he had a wide horizon. All in between is, for Palestine, remarkably fertile, a place where peasants have ever continued to "covet fields and seize them." The place, too, is well watered.

We ate our luncheon beside the burial tomb of the ruler of a Phoenician colony here about 250 B.C. Opposite us a group of shepherd lads were watering their flocks from a large cistern cut into the rocks. An old man accompanied the young lads. Verily, Jacob and his sons!

Today, Moresheth, the old home of the Hebrew Micah, has changed its name and its people. It is a Muslim town crowned by the minaret from which the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. Nor have the followers of that other prophet forgotten Micah. Tabari in commenting on Micah 4:1-2 says: "This is clearly a description of Maccah (Mecca); it is to that many nations go for pilgrimage, repairing and plowing unto it in answer to the divine call. If somebody quibbles and says that Micah meant the temple of Jerusalem, how can he be right when God showed that the event shall take place in the last days?"

If we grant that persons may go to the prophets disregarding all historical sense and with license to read into their words whatever meaning they choose, we must grant that the Muslims are right. We must be fair. Before we pick the "mote" from the Muslim's eye, Jesus told us to extract whatever may be in our own.

II

THE GENIUS OF ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah was a great poet who knew how to handle a folk-notion in such a way that mankind to this day is subtly charmed and converted. Every great catastrophe brings a revival of pessimism which can see relief in no way except a final suicide

if it be a personal matter or a deluge if it be national. The hope in the breasts of thousands of the world's catastrophic ending is none other than the theme which the ancients called the "day of Yahweh." None of the prophets could abide the idea and each one in turn attacked it bitterly. Zephaniah left it in a great poem which forms the kernel of his book.

To the medieval hymn writer who loved the awfulness of mystery Zephaniah came as an inspiration. Professor Bewer[1] has pointed out that the famous hymn "Dies Irae" is his heritage to the church:

> Day of wrath, O day of mourning!
> See fulfilled the prophets' warning,
> Heaven and earth in ashes burning!

With Zephaniah begins the elements known in Biblical Literature as eschatological and apocalyptic. The former deals with the ending of the world order through a terrible catastrophe; and the latter deals with the hidden result of God's plan. As the apocalyptists flourished, the prophets declined. But this is anticipating.

III

THE PROPHETIC RETELLING OF THE LAW

The Torah (Law) as originally given put a deal of emphasis on priestly forms and inherited ideas which crystallized into folk religion. We have seen how the prophets reacted to this. Deuteronomy humanized the Law. Its chief points are:

(1) Strict monotheism. Everything savoring of "other gods" must be cast off and forgotten. Israel's God, Yahweh, could have no partners and no comparisons. (2) Israel must imitate the character and spirit of its God in its dealings one with another. The sabbath day in the new code is "made for man and not man for the sabbath." God gave it from his love for man and not as in Genesis because "God rested" after his work. A prophetic difference! (3) Jerusalem's temple is to be the one and only legal place of worship. The primitive life of the people made use of various and sundry shrines, which more often partook of the nature of heathen forms of worship than of the moral purity demanded by their God. All these local

[1] Quoted in "Literature of the Old Testament," page 137.

country shrines were now closed and their priests made porters and janitors in Jerusalem, in order that pagan immorality might be wiped out.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

On what scale did Micah value a human being? Is Jesus' attitude toward children like Micah's? Can you find other similarities? In how far was Micah a champion of women?

How do we value a human being today?

Has Zephaniah inspired you in the past equally with other books of the Bible? Give reasons for your answer. What evidences of folk religion have you found that parallel certain ideas in the prophet's time? Why have these beliefs persisted? How would you introduce Zephaniah to a group of young people, say a "Hi-Y" group?

Compare the ten Commandments in Exodus 20 with the same in Deuteronomy.

What differences do you detect? Give reasons.

What is the meaning of the word Deuteronomy? Read II Kings 22 ff. This gives the history of the book. Who do you think was the author or authors?

What use in the Gospels does Jesus make of Deuteronomy? What is the *Shema?* How can this book be effectively used by missionaries?

Chapter IX

Jeremiah of Anathoth, Imprisoned for his Convictions

We have gone far enough in our study of the Hebrew prophets to see that whatever else they may have been, they were great poets. It is necessary here to say a word about Hebrew poetry. Certain books of the Old Testament are entirely (except perhaps for a prose introduction or editor's note) in verse. These are: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and the greater part of the writings of the prophets except Zechariah, Chapter 3:1-8, Malachi, and Jonah. Certain other books contain poems, as Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, etc.

Unlike Greek and Latin verse, Hebrew poetry cannot be scanned by the quantitative system, i.e., feet measured by syllabic divisions. The movement in Hebrew verse is from stress to stress, accented to unaccented syllables exactly as in English. The various moods of the poet find expression in various metrical forms. One of the common forms is the *Kina* measure used in the elegy and very often employed by the prophets. Its form is $3 + 2$. The famous funeral song in Amos gives a good illustration of the Kina verse measure:

Israel's Virgin has fallen, 3 beats
No more shall she rise. 2 beats

Variations of this form occur as $3 + 3$, $4 + 4$, etc., as fits the mood of the poet.

The real characteristic of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. Even in the prose versions this can be noted. The cesura (natural division in thought) divides each line into two groups which balance each other thus:

All rivers flow into the sea,
Yet the sea is not full.
To the place whither the rivers flow,
From there they flow back again.—Ecc. 1:7.

Or in Psalm 23:

Yahweh is my shepherd,
I shall not want.
He causes me to lie in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters.—Ps. 23:1-2.

It will be seen that the second verse balances or explains or contrasts or compares or supplements the first verse. The four verses make a stanza. (*Note a verse in poetry means a single line.*)

With this introduction we can better understand the poetry of Jeremiah. This prophet was exceedingly versatile not only in thought but also in his use of verse forms. Eminent scholars are by no means agreed as to certain parts of the book. Some scholars would limit Jeremiah to a certain form of verse; others give him all possible poetic license and freedom.

His book, however, is not entirely in verse; it contains, in fact, several varieties of literature. Chapter 36, for instance, is ordinary narrative prose. Baruch's biography is prose, as are certain historical references; oratory similar to Deuteronomy also occurs; but the bulk of the book is in verse. The book may be divided as follows: Chapter 1, the prophet's call; addresses (oracles) to Judah between the years 637-586, chapters 2-35; Baruch's biography of Jeremiah, 36-45; oracles against the foreign nations, 46-51; conclusion, 52.

First Day: Jeremiah's Call in 626 B.C.

And Yahweh's word came to me:

Before you came into being, I knew you,
Before you were born, I consecrated you
For a prophet, and to the people I gave you.

Jeremiah replies: O Lord Yahweh, I don't know how to speak because I am merely a boy.

But Yahweh answered:

Don't say, I am merely a boy,
Because you shall go where I send you,
And all that I command shall you speak.
Fear none of them, nobody at all,
For I am with you to protect you.

Then Yahweh reached out his hand, touched my mouth and said to me:

Behold, My word I have put in your mouth!
Observe, today have I committed to you
The destinies of nations and kingdoms,
To destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.

—Jeremiah 1: 4-10.

Notice the parallelism in the verse form. The meter is partly of three and partly four beats.

In the lives of all there are outstanding days, which can never be forgotten. So this day of Jeremiah's call—the day on which he became convinced of a great religious truth, viz., before his own mother became conscious of his existence, God knew about him and planned his life. The most difficult of all tasks has been foreordained for the young man of Anathoth; he must be a *prophet*. His life must henceforth be devoted to receiving and giving out the divinely inspired *word*.

Jeremiah trembles before this annunciation. He calls himself "merely a boy" but, in fact, he was about twenty-four years old. The Hebrew often used this term as one of hyperbole. He rebels against a call that must mean hostility between his people and himself, a life of persecution and disappointment. The story of this man's life is our present study.

What is the psychological reaction of a belief that God desires one to do a certain thing? Compare Paul's feeling about preaching the Good News of Jesus. What is the story of Jeremiah's call? Are there any similarities with Isaiah's call?

Second Day: Jeremiah is Forbidden to Marry.

Then came Yahweh's word to me as follows:

You shall neither marry,
Nor shall you have sons
Nor daughters in this place.
For this is Yahweh's decree
Concerning the sons and daughters
Who are born in this place,
And concerning their mothers
And fathers in this land:
They shall die terrible deaths,

Unwept and unburied to lie
As dung on the surface of the ground.
Sword and famine shall consume them.
Their bodies shall be food for birds
And beasts of the land.

—Jeremiah 16: 1-4.

To a young Palestinian no command could be more unnatural, severe, or discouraging. Every youth in Palestine marries young. Jeremiah, accordingly, must have had from his early boyhood a premonition of his future work and the utter impossibility of being able to lead a normal life like his countrymen. He further saw that for conscience's sake he would be obliged to spend time in prison. Jeremiah from the beginning was a conscientious objector to many things and like Jesus he never trimmed his message to suit the feelings of his hearers. It is interesting to read history's roster of those despised and rejected and imprisoned in their own day whom later generations acclaim as the great of the earth.

Jeremiah's prediction here, of course, came true shortly after. His statesman's eye and ear told him that Judah could never survive her political destiny which lay in the hands of incompetent men. Jeremiah like Jesus had to sacrifice his life in the vain attempt to call his people to a sensible way of life.

Why are the conscientious objectors, heretics, "jail birds" of one generation often hailed as the emancipators of the following generations?

How did Jeremiah have to pay the great sacrifice in order to be true to his calling?

Third Day: Jeremiah Works for the Adoption of Deuteronomy.

Yahweh's commission came to Jeremiah as follows:

Hear the words of this covenant and proclaim them to the people of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Say to them, Thus says Yahweh, Israel's God: Cursed is the man who does not hear the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers on the day that I brought them from Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Listen to my voice and do everything I have commanded you, then shall

you be my people and I will be your God, in order that I may fulfill the oath which I swore to your fathers to give them a land flowing with milk and honey as today. Then I answered and said, May it be so (amen), O Yahweh.—Jeremiah 11: 1-5.

As we learned in the last chapter, the Book of Deuteronomy was found in the temple and published in 621 B.C., five years before Jeremiah's call. This was in the eighteenth year of the reign of King Josiah, who was beloved by all Judah. This newly found book at once aroused the people's minds, which had been prepared by the Scythian invasion described both by Zephaniah and Jeremiah. After some discussion (cf. II Kings 22 f.), Josiah called the people together and formally adopted the new prophetic code. This act of King Josiah redounded to the good of the whole world. The Hebrew religion began now its prophetic renaissance. Jeremiah approved of it, as the above passage shows. The reformation of Josiah purged Judah's religion of many points in folk and priestly religion. It marked the momentary triumph of the prophetic teachings. The story of the reformation is told in II Kings 23. The most important changes were: Idolatry and the "high places," which cling so tenaciously to folk religion, were abolished. Human sacrifice in the Valley of Hinnom (Gehenna of the New Testament) was forbidden. Micah had conquered. Sun worship also fell into the forbidden list along with the sanctuaries for foreigners.

But while the prophetic religion seemed to have triumphed through Deuteronomy, it also suffered a serious drawback in the effect of this code on the people. From this time they became the "people of the book" and prophetic freedom began to die. Jeremiah was the last great prophet in Palestine, and in his later years he opposed the new tendency to refer to a book rather than to the ever living, ever revealing God. To this day, the Jews, Christians, and Muslims are known in Palestine as the "people of the book." The tragedy is that all three have studied their books oftentimes more than the God who inspired them.

What was Jeremiah's attitude toward Deuteronomy? Why was Josiah especially beloved? Was it easier to be a king or prophet in the last days of Judah? What is meant by "people of a book"?

Fourth Day: The Elegy for Josiah and His Son.

Lament not for the one who is dead,
Do not bemoan him;
Weep for the departing one,
No more to return
To see his native land.

—Jeremiah 22:10.

In 607 occurred the battle of Megiddo, one of the decisive battles of the world. The great Tell Megiddo stands today in the plain of Esdraelon as a mute testimony to a once great and famous strategical center. Thither marched Pharaoh-Necho on his way to establish Egypt's prestige on the Euphrates. Josiah, the valiant young Judean king, foolishly marched against him, probably at the encouragement of false, militaristic prophets. Here the young king fell and the glory of Judah departed. The calamity so impressed the minds of the people that its memory is reflected in the Book of Revelation (16:16), where it figures as an eschatological picture of utter ruin to attend the last days of the world.

Judah now became a vassal of Egypt, and the Pharaoh immediately sent for Jehoahaz, the son of Josiah, whom the people had made king. He deposed him and took him captive to Egypt, setting up his brother Jehoiakim, who was pro-Egyptian, as king. These last kings found themselves in the midst of problems too difficult for them. Things went from bad to worse. During this whole time the only clear head was Jeremiah's. He, however, for his fearless talking spent much time in prison. He composed the above poem at the time Jehoahaz was carried into Egyptian exile. The people were still in mourning for Josiah but Jeremiah tells them rather to lament the unfortunate son whose exile is far worse than death.

Read the whole account in II Kings 23 and in Jeremiah 22:10-12.

Why did Jeremiah consider the fate of the son worse than that of the father?

Students of history are by no means agreed as to Josiah's foolishly rushing into war with Pharaoh-Necho. Consult some competent historians and try to determine intelligently the most probable reason.

Fifth Day: Jeremiah's Temple Speech Results in His Death Sentence.

Yahweh speaks through Jeremiah:

All you have to do is to go to my place which is in Shiloh where at the very first I caused my name to dwell to see what I did there as the result of my people Israel's wickedness. And now because of your committing all these acts (It's Yahweh's word!) although I repeatedly spoke to you but you did not hear and I called to you but you did not answer, I shall do to this temple, which is dedicated to my name and in which you trust, the very place I gave to you and to your fathers, the very thing I did to Shiloh. Verily I shall send you away from me precisely as I did all your brothers, the whole of Ephraim.

Now the priests, prophets, and the rest of the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in Yahweh's temple. And as he finished speaking everything Yahweh told him to say to all the people, priests, prophets, and people arrested him saying: You must die. Why do you prophesy in Yahweh's name saying: This temple shall be like Shiloh and this city shall be deserted without an inhabitant? And the whole crowd gathered around Jeremiah at Yahweh's temple.—Jeremiah 7: 12-15; 26: 7-9.

Chapters 7 and 26 tell the story of Jeremiah's famous temple speech and his subsequent narrow escape from death. We have seen in our study of Isaiah that the popular folk religion held tenaciously to the dogma of the inviolability of Jerusalem. As the power of Egypt and later that of Chaldea loomed ever more menacing on the horizon, Jeremiah began to see that Jerusalem would surely face destruction unless a radical change in the policy of the government was straightway carried out. In this view he stood alone. All the other prophets (their ideals proved false) stood with the crowd, anxious to get rid of the man of Anathoth whom they regarded as unpatriotic.

About a mile off the present Samaria-Jerusalem automobile road lies a heap of stones on a hill top, the mute remnant of Shiloh. Here in the early days the people came to meet God and to learn his will. The first national calamity was the total destruction of this sanctuary by the Philistines in the days of Samuel. The author of Psalm 78 refers to it as the extremity of God's punishment. In Jeremiah's time, the old legend of Shiloh had become a story that mothers told their children to

frighten them. Accordingly when Jeremiah appears in the holy temple of the capital and tells the people that their beloved sanctuary must become a proverb and example like Shiloh, they become so enraged that they condemn him to death. As we noted in our study of Micah, the earlier prophet had likewise predicted a similar destruction. A friend of Jeremiah now comes to his rescue and frees him because of this precedent.

What is the story of the romance of Shiloh? Why is folk religion always wedded to localism and other forms of patriotism? What course would you have approved of if you had been one of the mob shouting for Jeremiah's death? Did he deserve to be punished?

Sixth Day: Jeremiah's Method of Teaching.

1. The symbolic lesson of the girdle.

Yahweh spoke to me as follows:
Go buy yourself a linen girdle and wear it on your loins but do not put it into the water. So I bought the waist-cloth according to Yahweh's command and I put it on my loins.
Then came Yahweh's word a second time to me as follows:
Take the girdle which you have bought which is on your loins, rise up, go to Perath and bury it there in a hole in the rock. So I went and buried it in Perath just as Yahweh commanded me.
After seven days Yahweh again spoke to me as follows:
Rise, go to Perath and take away the girdle which I commanded you to bury there. .So I went to Perath and dug and took the waist-cloth from the place where I had buried it. But, behold, the waist-cloth was ruined. It was good for nothing.—Jeremiah 13: 1-7.

As we have already seen, prophets often spoke to people by signs, charades, pantomimes, symbolic names, etc. They anticipated the idea of appealing to the eye, represented by the modern motion picture. This method has always been used in the Orient, where the majority of the people cannot read but where all know how to listen and to appreciate action and acting of every kind. The act here parallels that of Isaiah told us in chapter 20. Jeremiah goes clad in a girdle which after a few days is to be hid in a hole in the rock in Perath, a valley near

Anathoth, his home, known today as Wadi Fara, by tradition the valley of the Twenty-third Psalm. (The older versions translated without warrant Euphrates but Jeremiah never had anything to do with the Euphrates.)

The girdle or loin cloth was worn by the oriental next to the skin and shows the close relation which should have existed between Judah and its God. To the oriental, again, this garment is a thing of beauty. A marred loin cloth nobody would want. So with Judah. Apart from God there is nothing but a marred, soiled life.

Like Isaiah 5, this parable is a fine example of that type of literature as found in the Old Testament. Jesus knew these parables well. He was not only taught them at home but he heard them read in the Synagog and studied them at school. This was part of the literary preparation for the perfection of style found in the parables of the New Testament.

What is the meaning of this parable? Tell it in your own words and explain the places mentioned by use of a map. Why did Jesus teach in parables? What takes the place of parables today?

Seventh Day: Jeremiah's Method of Teaching.

2. The symbolic lesson from the potter.

The following message came to Jeremiah from Yahweh: Rise and go down to the potter's house; there will I tell you my message. So I went down to the potter's house and behold he was doing his work on the wheels. Now if the pot being made of clay was marred while in the potter's hand, he made a different kind of a vessel out of it. It happened just as seemed good in the potter's eyes.

Then came Yahweh's word to me as follows: O Israel, can't I do with you exactly as the potter does? Look at the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O Israel.

Jeremiah here does exactly as did Jesus. He draws a lesson from the everyday acts of the people around him. He sees God in everything. This parable of the potter is typically Palestinian. The countless tells throughout the Orient today bear witness to the untiring work of generations of potters. These old potsherds today tell the stories of ancient cities and their

inhabitants. Reading potsherds is a fine art of the modern archaeologist.

It is a simple lesson which the prophet gives here. The soft clay in the potter's hand has infinite possibilities wrapped up in it. It may be a water pot or an oil cruse or anything else. If the wheel mars a good water pot, a little lamp may be perfected since none of the malleable clay is lost. So for Israel. There is always hope in God. If Israel has fallen short of all he may have been, yet he can be perfect in another way. Browning caught the real meaning of Jeremiah in his inimitable words in "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

"All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

Why did Jesus, like many of the literary prophets before him, choose illustrations from everyday life? Why is the potter often alluded to in Biblical literature? What is the deeply religious value of the lesson? How can you use Browning to cheer on a discouraged soul?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

In order adequately to appreciate Jeremiah and to feel that we have a really personal acquaintance with him we must try to learn about two things. The first of these is Anathoth (modern Anata), the home of the prophet. What was his environment? What did he see as a boy and young man? What did nature teach him of God? All these go together to make any man. The second of these requirements is to know the man himself. Let us set ourselves to our task.

I

ANATHOTH, THE HOME OF JEREMIAH

A little more than three miles to the northeast of Jerusalem lies the little Moslem village called Anata. It has no spacious boulevards leading into it, nor does it have an arch of triumph, nor do buildings of historic interest mark its horizon. In fact, half hidden among the hills rolling away from the Mount of Olives, it escapes even the majority of travelers. The first glimpse I had of the little village was from a tower on the

Mount of Olives. From this distance it looks like a group of ordinary stone houses plastered with mud and clay such as peasants inhabit. It is a mere yellow spot in the still yellower sunshine and were it not for a fringe of olive and fig trees, it would melt into the distant horizon of barrenness known as the Wilderness of the Jordan. Let us make a visit together to this unattractive little hamlet.

We leave Jerusalem skirting the Mount of Olives and pass over the old road mentioned in Isaiah, Chapter 10, over which the Assyrians hastened toward the capital. We may go a bit off the road to visit Tell el-Ful where the American School is excavating. According to II Samuel 21, this was the burial place of Saul "in the land of Benjamin." While we were looking over the tell, one of the natives suddenly began speaking English. On asking him where he learned the latter he said: "Oh, I lived fourteen years in California. I had to come back because it is my native land and most of my people are here in their graves." This is only one of many such illustrations showing how the thinking of the people has remained unchanged since the days of the patriarchs. Every last Palestinian today desires to be "gathered to his fathers" in his fatherland.

This is the border of Benjamin and a glorious site for a city. In Saul's time it was probably a small fort on the summit of the hill. In the later times it grew in importance. From here one can see both Anathoth and Bethel as well as the Dead Sea.

We continue over an almost impassable country road and soon come to a Muslim cemetery which marks the beginning of Jeremiah's village. Like all Muslim cemeteries this is unkempt and has all the air of the forlornness of being forsaken. Near it is the remains of an old cistern of great size once used by the town when it saw its time of prosperity. The peasant houses come next and in their walls we see fragments of once lofty and beautiful columns. At the entrance of the village we stop to see the ruins of an old building of considerable size. This was undoubtedly a Christian basilica dating back to the earliest times of church building. Here the Christians came to honor the memory of the great prophet but persecution and conquest soon closed the town to them and the very existence of the basilica was forgotten. We climb up to the roof of one of the houses to see the view that Jeremiah enjoyed. (Judges 20-21 tells of this region and should be read in this connection.) Toward the east rise the hills (mountains the natives call them) of Benja-

min, reflecting the light of the sun as only Palestinian hills can. Part of the Dead Sea shows, adding its silver sheen to the setting. Villages dot the rest of the horizon, and over it all rests a calmness ever unknown in the throbbing city, so near and yet entirely hidden.

We go toward the northeast and come to the Wadi Fara. This by tradition is the valley described in the Twenty-third Psalm. Truly the consciousness of the ever companioning presence of God there described is worthy of the faith of Jeremiah. This is the place described in the Hebrew text as *Perath.* The older translations rendered this Euphrates but the original has not the word *river* which is the usual designation in Biblical Hebrew. This old rendering is but another example of the *allegorical* interpretation so fatal to a proper understanding of the real meaning of any author but so beloved by the older exegetes who found it a convenient remedy when in trouble.

One other characteristic of Anathoth must not be forgotten and that is the nearness to the desert. Wadi Fara merges into Wadi Kelt (the Brook Cherith of Elijah's story) and is lost in the wilderness of the Jordan. Like Jesus, Jeremiah was ever exposed to the desert though neither of them could be called, like John the Baptizer, a desert prophet. Across and beyond it all, the young prophet could see beautiful Gilead, which must have charmed his soul as it does that of any nature loving traveler today. When in after years Jerusalem put him into prison and even his native villagers recognized him no longer, he felt sure that there yet remained "balm in Gilead."

II

THE MAN HIMSELF

Jeremiah is the first of the great prophets to come of a priestly family. His father's name was Hilkiah (not the Hilkiah who helped discover Deuteronomy), and he was a country priest in Anathoth of the tribe of Benjamin. At his birth his father gave him an ominous name, Yirmyahu (English Jeremiah), which in the Hebrew means *Yahweh throws.* Eli of Shiloh was an ancestor of the prophet. The story is told in I Kings 2:26. Abiathar was the last of the family to officiate as priest of the ark. At the accession of Solomon he fell into disfavor and was banished to his inheritance in Anathoth.

Thus the romance of Shiloh was born into the bone and blood of the prophet. It is quite probable that some of the resentment for the régime in Jerusalem clung to the family. At any rate, in the famous temple speech, Jeremiah told the proud and overconfident citizens that their own vaunted temple would one day equal the stone heap which marked the once noble shrine tended by his honored ancestor.

A son of such a heritage received a careful training in the tradition and religion of his people. His education, however, saved him from the narrow patriotism which characterized the "false prophets" of the period. Of course, the treatment his ancestor, Abiathar, had received, would make negligible any possible blind devotion to his native land which would let him overlook the symptoms of its death. It was just this element that saved Jeremiah from wearing the ephod as a priest.

Another interesting event arose at the same time, viz., the discovery of the book now called Deuteronomy. At the passover season (corresponding to our Easter) when Jeremiah was about twenty-eight and relatively an unknown Anathothan, a great convention was called at the capital. We may be certain that the young prophet attended this convention and on his return home told the villagers as they gathered in the market place all about it, including the demands of the new law. This again had a far-reaching effect on Jeremiah's family. No more could a priest officiate at the local village shrine. The capital from now on was the center of worship. The country priests could be janitors at Jerusalem if they wished, but nothing more. It was of the greatest good for the world that the son had decided to take the mantle of the prophet before he could be degraded as a village priest. In this way a great man was saved for the world.

In our *third day* of this week we have seen the work which Jeremiah did for the adoption of the new code. His idealism was fired by the prophetic principles involved and he worked with zeal to have it put into practice. In the impetus of his youth he little realized the deadening effect sure to come by making the people turn to a book or written record rather than to the ever revealing God. The idea of a code ever grew in the imagination of the people. This, too, was heightened by the exile and when we find Ezekiel beside the Grand Canal in Babylon he is guided by an older revelation which has received the respect due to authority.

The really great contribution which Jeremiah made to the philosophy of religion was his teaching of the value of the individual to God. He continued Hosea's love teaching and made it apply to every son and daughter of the great Creator. Jesus found a kindred spirit in the great prophet and quoted him on more than one occasion. Jeremiah believed both in the conservatism and in the progressiveness that always accompanies any program of idealism.

He told the people on one occasion to

> Ask about the old ways,
> The good way and walk in it,
> Then you shall find rest for your souls.
>
> —Jeremiah 6:16.

There is here the fine truth of rooting oneself in the past and yet not making that a drawback. One must be nourished by the experience of the earlier days but ever look toward the future's advancement. This is exactly what Jesus taught in the Gospels and, in fact, he quoted part of this verse in Matthew 11:29.

Jeremiah saw the logical implications of the future struggle of Paul regarding the rites of the Torah. More and more the people settled into priestly religion with such rites as circumcision overexaggerated. Paul's "Letter to the Galatians" in which he so severely denounces the Judaisers might well have had the prophet's verses as its inspiration.

> I will put my law in their heart,
> And in their mind will I write it;
> And I will be their God,
> And they shall be my people.
> Then none shall teach his neighbor,
> And say, Know Yahweh;
> But all shall surely know me,
> The small as well as the great.
> Then will I forgive them their guilt,
> And think of their sins no more.
>
> —Jeremiah 31:33b-34.

This was going a long way for a prophet to teach a people who believed in the efficacy and necessity of such external rites as abound in folk and priestly religion. Yes, here is the grain sown for the religion of freedom found in the *way of life* of Jesus and in the philosophy of freedom of the letters of Paul.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

I. Jeremiah the villager and poet.
How does a knowledge of Jeremiah's home and early environment help you to see him as a real individual?
What contribution did he make to our ideas of religion as held today?
Study his poems for their parallelism and metrical style.
How does he compare with Isaiah as a great poet?
Why did Jesus quote Jeremiah? Was Jesus a poet?

II. How a member of a priestly family became a prophet.
What effect did the early training in a priestly family have on Jeremiah's life work?
Why do you think he decided to be a prophet when the prophets were always at odds with the priests?
How do you account for his early enthusiasm for Deuteronomy?

III. Jeremiah and the folk religion of his day.
How can you trace the idea of the inviolability of Jerusalem?
What part did Micah's prophecy play in saving Jeremiah's life?
Why would Jeremiah know all about Shiloh's history?
How did he use this story to such astonishing effect?
In what sense was Jeremiah a patriot?

IV. The Prophet's method of teaching.
Why did Jeremiah feel that he should never marry? Read I Corinthians 7. Do you think Paul had the same reasons when he answered the question put to him by the young man of Corinth? Why?
What is the use of parabolic teaching? Why would the hiding of a garment in Perath (Wadi Fara) have been a strong object lesson to the villagers of Anathoth? Why was the parable of the potter very apt?
Why did Jesus use parables to explain every point in his Way of Life as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount?

Chapter X

Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and the Last Days of Judah

JEREMIAH AND THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAH

After the tragic death of King Josiah his two sons succeeded to the throne in rapid succession. The older of the two, Jehoahaz, reigned but three months when he was deposed by Necho, who appointed his younger, pro-Egyptian brother, Jehoiakim, who reigned eleven years. We have already read in last week's study, Jeremiah's elegy for Josiah and Jehoahaz. He now turned his attention to Jehoiakim, upbraiding him as an unworthy son of his noble father.

First Day: Jeremiah Contrasts Jehoiakim with His Father, Josiah.

Are you king to try
To excel in cedar?
Did not your father, as he ate and drank,
Practice justice and righteousness,
As judge for the poor and needy?
So was it well with him.
Is not that knowing me?
Says Yahweh.
But you have neither eye nor heart
Except for your own greed,
And shedding innocent blood,
Along with oppression and violence.

Therefore, Yahweh spoke as follows concerning Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah:

They shall not lament him,
Alas my brother!

They shall not lament him,
Alas O Lord,
O majesty!
His is an ass's burial
Drawn and cast
Beyond Jerusalem's gates.

—Jeremiah 22: 15-19.

Jeremiah uses no uncertain words in expressing himself concerning the young king. The poem dates from the first years of his rule while the hopes of the people yet ran high and the king could raise money by taxation for his building schemes. The prophet asks him bluntly whether he thinks the business of being a king is to excel in building costly cedar buildings. Nay! His father set the right example of what a king should be and do. Josiah's practice of justice and righteousness was as natural as his eating and drinking. Jeremiah harks to the social message of Amos and Micah. Religion is honesty in everyday life. Then come those biting words which no oriental king could endure:

But you have neither eye nor heart
Except for your own greed.

From that hour an enmity arose between prophet and king that nothing but death could annul.

But Jeremiah has not yet finished with his majesty's history. He should be buried like a dead donkey. This to a Palestinian meant two things: First, a common occurrence. Who had not seen beside the hot and dusty road the carcass of an animal, worn out by endless toil of the years, lying unburied? But this for a king! Impossible! Even Jehu gave orders for the proper interment of his hated rival, Jezebel, because she was the daughter of a king. The Hebrews felt exactly like the Egyptians about burial. One only needs to think of the tomb of Tutankhamen to understand the glory of a royal burial. Again, the ancients held that unless the body had proper burial the soul had no rest. Jeremiah's words to Jehoiakim remain unsurpassed in the literature of the world. How dare a villager of Anathoth speak thus to his majesty in Jerusalem?

How did the king and prophet compare as men? Why did the ideals of the two differ so widely? What did the king care about religion? What did it mean to Jeremiah? How do you account for the latter's boldness?

Why did the ancients regard burial with such importance? Read Sophocles' "Antigone" for the Greek feeling. What do we learn from Tutankhamen's tomb?

Second Day: Jeremiah Foretells the Chaldean Conquest.

The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, King of Judah. This was the first year of the reign of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon. (604 B.C.) Jeremiah, the prophet, spoke it to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. . . . Therefore Yahweh of Hosts spoke as follows: Because you have not listened to my words behold I am sending to take all the tribes of the north and Nebuchadrezzer, king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this country and against its inhabitants and against its neighbors; and I shall utterly destroy them and make them a joke, a disgrace, and an eternal desolation. And I will take from them the sound of mirth and the sound of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the lamp. This whole country shall be deserted and ruined; and these folks shall serve the Babylonian king for seventy years.—Jeremiah 25: 1-2; 8-11.

In 605, the year of this speech, occurred another decisive battle of the world, Charchemish. The power of Egypt fell before that of the new Babylonian, the Chaldean. Palestine now became automatically the property of Nebuchadrezzar. Jeremiah at once took up his cudgels against the Jerusalem régime and told the king that soon the Chaldean king would visit upon Judah all that Assyria had done to Israel. This happened in 597 when the Chaldean army marched on Jerusalem. Just at the time of the army's coming Jehoiakim died. He was buried with royal honors (II Kings 24: 6) while the royalists persecuted Jeremiah in memory of his prediction that the king should be buried like a donkey. His son Jehoiakim was made king but ruled only three months when Nebuchadrezzar captured the capital and carried him with many of his subjects into exile. Zedekiah, the last Judean king, succeeded him.

For eleven years a semi-independent national life survived. Jeremiah, continually accused by the nationalists of being pro-Chaldean, urged the government to submit to the taxes and to

the way of life demanded by his God. The prophet, however, grew more and more unpopular due to the war hysteria, and spent his time partly in stocks, partly in prison, and partly in getting his speeches into book form. He began to feel old age coming on.

His picture of the complete desolation of the land is complete. Palestine is nothing without its wedding processions, its sound of the mills and lights of the lamps fed by olive oil. The seventy years of exile mean in the idiom of the original merely an indefinite time. People devoid of any historical sense have twisted biblical numbers and have given them allegorical meanings which the authors never meant. It is always wrong to take such numbers in an allegorical way. The author's meaning must be *historically* understood.

Why cannot the life story and teaching of Jeremiah be understood apart from the history of the time? How does this illustrate the relation between religion and history?

Describe in your own words Jeremiah's picture of desolate Judah. In how far did his predictions really come true?

Third Day: Jeremiah in Prison Receives a Visit from His Country Cousin.

And Jeremiah said, Yahweh's word came to me as follows: Behold Hanamel, the son of your uncle Shallum shall come to you and say: Buy my field in Anathoth because you have the right of purchase. Just as Yahweh said, Hanamel, my cousin, came to me in prison and said to me, Please buy my field in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin, because you have the right of purchase and the right of redemption. Buy it for yourself. Then I knew it was Yahweh's command. So I bought the field from my cousin, Hanamel in Anathoth and weighed him out the money, seventeen shekels of silver, put my signature to the deed, sealed it before witnesses and weighed out the money in the scales. Then I took the sealed deed and the open one and gave them to Baruch, son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin, Hanamel and in the presence of the witnesses who had put their signatures to the deed, in the presence of all the Jews who sat in the prison. And I charged Baruch before them: Thus says Yahweh, Israel's God, take these deeds, the sealed deed and the open deed and put them in an earthen vessel that they may be pre-

served. For Yahweh of Hosts, Israel's God, says: Again shall one buy houses, fields, and vineyards in this country.—Jeremiah 32: 6-15.

This story happened in the tenth year of King Zedekiah (i.e., in 587), one year before the destruction of the Capital. Jeremiah was in prison as being pro-Chaldean, but not in solitary confinement. His friends freely visited him, as they did Paul in Rome, but he was not permitted to go out. One day his country cousin, Hanamel, came to ask him to buy his plot of ground in Anathoth. The war had reduced the meager livelihood of the villagers so that they had to sell whatever they could. The old law of inheritance made it necessary to keep the plot of ground in the family. Jeremiah had the money and as soon as he felt the thing came from God readily exchanged the money, now useless to him, for the ground. The prophet heard the voice of God in that of his cousin and his old radiant joy came back to him. Even in prison, Jeremiah, like Socrates, never faltered. Again, after the years of experience, shall the peasants care for their farms in the country! This the prophet himself did not see, but he was right.

The story has not only interest for the way it reveals Jeremiah's indomitable optimism but interest for the archaeologist and historian. Note the method of transferring property. Even the method of signing the deeds before witnesses is minutely recorded! Baruch, the trusted secretary, put them in the safety deposit box, a jar, which was buried. This also was the Babylonian custom of preserving important papers. Who knows? Perhaps the archaeologists shall yet bring to light hidden records which shall reveal to us yet further the life and times of these great men of God.

Refute the prevalent but erroneous idea that Jeremiah was a weeping prophet. How did such an idea originate?

How did ancient Judea treat pro-enemy suspects in time of war? Are governments and nationalists always right? Ever right? How has a conscientious pro-enemy Judean, who spent most of his time in prison during war, become one of the world's famous characters?

Tell in your own words the visit of Jeremiah's cousin; then let your imagination continue and picture his return to his wife and children with the money so much needed by the war-famished family.

Fourth Day: Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles in Babylonia.

Yahweh of Hosts, Israel's God, spoke as follows to all those carried away into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon:

Build houses and live in them,
Plant gardens and eat the fruit.
Marry and beget sons and daughters,
Also take wives for your sons,
And give your daughters to men,
That they may bear sons and daughters;
Multiply and do not decrease.
Seek the prosperity of the city,
Whither you dwell in exile;
And pray for it to Yahweh,
For in her peace lies your own.

—Jeremiah 29: 4-7.

In 586 Jerusalem fell to the Chaldeans. King Zedekiah and his sons were taken to Nebuchadrezzar's camp at Riblah on the Orontes, where the king was unmercifully blinded after witnessing the death of his sons, and then carried to a Babylonian prison to end his days. The history of Israel would have ended here had it not been for the prophetic philosophy. Jeremiah remained cool and self-possessed. He decided to remain in Jerusalem with the consent of the Chaldean king while all the important inhabitants of the city were either slain or carried captive to Babylon.

The prophet was now an old man and in the twilight of his life. Almost his last act in the city he had loved and prayed for was to write a letter to the exiles. How true he remained to his ideal! Instead of telling them that they would soon come back, he told them to be good citizens of the country into which they had been carried. They were to pray for its safety as they valued their own. Never a nationalist, the old prophet now counsels the exiles' becoming a part of the Chaldean Empire. Why not? His religion, like Jesus', was above all party or nationalistic lines. The religion of the moral imperative of God must be necessary and universal.

How do you think the nationalists received Jeremiah's letter? How would the Chaldean government regard it? How would the prophet's advice be received today in a similar situation?

What types of religion can flourish only in an atmosphere of nationalism? Why did it make no difference either to Jeremiah or Jesus whether their people had home rule or not?

Fifth Day: The Last Known Record of Jeremiah.

And Jeremiah spoke to all the people, to the men and women and the people answering him, saying: Has it not been the incense which you burned in the Judean cities and in the streets of Jerusalem, you, your fathers, your kings and princes and the peasants? Has Yahweh not remembered them and kept them in mind? So your country became a ruin and a horror and a curse, where nobody lives. That is just as it is today. It is because you have burned incense and sinned against Yahweh; neither have you listened to Yahweh's voice nor have you gone according to his teaching and to his commandments and his statutes, for this reason this calamity has fallen upon you just as it is today.—Jeremiah 20: 20-23.

The wretched survivors left in the neighborhood of the ruins of the Capital planned to go to Egypt to find an asylum with the Egyptian Jews. The aged prophet steadfastly objected to their leaving the city but they won the day and took Jeremiah with them. Once in the land of the Pharaoh, they returned to their old forms of polytheistic worship and began to pay reverence to Ishtar, Queen of Heaven. (Cf. chapters 7 and 44 in this connection.) Jeremiah rebuked them according to his old straightforward manner. He tried once again to make it plain that their consistent refusal to serve their God as he desired was the sole cause of their misfortune.

The action of the people, however, is perfectly comprehensible. Weakened by war hysteria, fear, hunger, and hate, a people turns like a drowning man to any possible panacea. Missionaries have observed on the foreign field the tendency of converts, during a period of great fear, to turn to the old gods. The parallel with the remnant of Judah is perfect. With such as these, the old man must spend his last days. This is one of the world's tragedies! The people did not want to listen to him although they forced him to come with them. His strength must have fast failed him. We hear no more of him. Probably he soon died and found an unmarked Egyptian grave. Nobody thought that this ex-convict would in the later years be hailed as one of God's noblemen.

Tell in your own words the story of the last days of Jeremiah. How did it happen that he died in Egypt rather than in Chaldea?

Read a good reference to Ishtar, Queen of Heaven. How far did her worship extend? Why did a feminine deity appeal to the emotions of primitive people?

Sixth Day: Nahum's Poem Predicting Nineveh's Fall.

Woe to the bloody city,
Full of violence and lies!
Prey never ceases.
Crack of whip, rattle of wheel,
And the gallop of horse
Along with the jolting chariot!
A rearing war horse,
Gleaming sword, flashing spear,
And a multitude of slain,
There is no end of bodies;
One stumbles over corpses,
From the many deeds of the harlot,
Beautiful mistress of enchantment,
Committing adultery with nations
And peoples with her coquetting.
Behold I'm coming against you, says Yahweh
I've uncovered your garment upon you
I've shown the nations your nakedness
And your shame is revealed to the kingdoms.
I've had uncleanness hurled upon you,
For a vile spectacle have I made you,
And shall hide when once they espy you,
Saying: Nineveh has fallen,
Who shall bewail her?
From whence could I find any one
Who would give comfort to her?
Can it be you are better than No-Amon
Built among the Rivers?
Her sea was her rampart,
Her wall was the water.—Nahum 3: 1-8.

In fiery, impetuous anger, Nahum thus predicts the fall of Nineveh, the proud capital of Assyria. He compares her to Thebes (No-Amon), the prosperous city of Egypt, under patronage of the god Amon, protected by the valley of the Nile.

Yet, Thebes, in spite of all her security, fell in 660 to Ashurbanipal. Nahum's assurance of the final overthrow of Nineveh proved itself true when in 606 she fell, together with the last of the kings of Assyria.

Note the imagery the poet uses. Militarism, war, murder, pillage, and the dead! Then he compares the city to a gaudily attired harlot, who, by her deceit and flattery, beguiles the unwary. Finally the power of the God of Israel, demanding justice and morality, descends upon Nineveh. In her desolation, no one mourns her, in her naked wickedness she lies as an object of scorn and derision. "The wages of sin is death."

Do you find in Nahum a message for Judah as you do in Jeremiah? Why did Judah hate Assyria so fiercely? Is Nahum's song a hymn of hate?

Seventh Day: Habakkuk's Appeal and Yahweh's Answer.

The book of Habakkuk is dramatic. The first chapter has a complaint of the prophet (verses 2-4), followed by a response (5-11), with a second reply (12-17) by the prophet. Chapter two begins with an appeal (verse 1), with Yahweh's directions for preparing clay tablets (2-3) on which is to be inscribed an oracle (4-5).

Habakkuk:

Upon my post will I stand,
And station myself on a tower;
I will look to see what he tells me,
And how he answers my complaint.

Then Yahweh answered me and said:

Write this vision,
Engrave it on tablets,
That the runner may read it.
It's a vision with its time appointed,
It hastens to its destined end.
If it lingers, wait for it
It's sure to come without fail.

The Oracle to be written on the tablets:

The upright shall deliver his soul,
And the righteous shall live by his faith.

—Habakkuk 2: 1-4.

This selection illustrates the question and answer method of a healthy human mind as it tries to find out the plan of God. Habakkuk, like Job and Koheleth (the author of the book commonly called "Ecclesiastes"), seeks to find out why the Divine Will permits certain things in the world.

The prophet's challenge here is beautifully expressed. Like a look-out man he takes his stand on the observation tower and waits. God answers giving first directions that his oracle may not be lost. It is to be inscribed after the manner of the Assyrians and Babylonians on tablets of clay. Habakkuk is the first prophet to speak of these tablets. Isaiah and even Ezekiel (later on) speak of the usual roll. But no chances can be taken with this oracle.

The Hebrew of the first line of the oracle has been imperfectly preserved and so is difficult to translate. The Revised Version translates "behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him," which makes no sense in the context whatever. I have for this line adopted the rendering of Dr. Ward in his commentary[1] which at least gives a proper parallelism and fits the thought of the next line.

The real contribution of Habakkuk which has permeated Christian thinking is the idea that the righteous shall live by his faithfulness. He means that God rules the world and all that man needs is to be loyal to him and his rule. The book of Job afterward worked this out and the apostle Paul and Martin Luther made it their slogan.

Compare Nahum's impetuosity with Habakkuk's watchfulness. What is the latter's problem? Is his answer a solution or a suggestion?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

Ordinarily one thinks of Judah's decline in connection with the brave battle of Jeremiah to keep the religion of the prophets yet burning in the hearts of the people. He, however, was but one—although the greatest—of many prophets of the time. Most of these prophets were merely cheap politicians, known as false prophets. We shall consider three true prophets and with these ends a great period in the history of Palestine. The exile marked the end of the old and the beginning of the new.

[1] "International Critical Commentary," New York (1911), page 14.

From now on, only a part of the people played any part on the stage of events. Israel became assimilated with the Assyrians; only a handful of the Judeans returned to Jerusalem and those who remained behind in the city lost their old fervor and zeal.

I

Jeremiah, then, was the last of the great prophets to live in Palestine. After his time we hear voices but they are far away in Babylon or in one or another of the provinces. The fires of the prophetic religion burned low except for rare individuals here and there. Folk religion and priestly religion again welled up in the anxious, defeated hearts of the people. They felt too sad to think. They consulted their feelings, not their intellects. Such a condition always attends war. One evil breeds another.

The period of history in which Jeremiah lived produced great men. Josiah, Pharaoh Necho, Nebuchadrezzar, Nabuzaradan need only be mentioned. All of these men with the exception of the prophet of Anathoth were kings or victorious generals. Only two, however, receive any response in the mind of the average person, and, of these two, no one would think of classing Nebuchadrezzar as Jeremiah's equal. Yet during the lifetime of these men, the prophet, despised and rejected by his countrymen, spent most of his time in prison or hiding, while the others wore the crown of victory and received the plaudits of the crowd. Irony of history!

As we have seen, Jeremiah's real trouble began under King Jehoiakim, the renegade son of the great reformer, Josiah. The stern prophet denounced him and his rule only to be answered by imprisonment and popular disfavor. Chapter 26 of his book tells us of a period spent in hiding. About this time, fearing that his life might be speedily terminated, he began dictating his messages to his loyal friend and secretary, Baruch. Later a copy of this book found its way to the king, who destroyed it (chapter 36). Finally, venturing forth, he had to meet the challenge of false politicians, of whom the prophet Hananiah (chapter 28) gives us a good example. During the first siege of the capital, Jehoiakim died, and after three months, was succeeded by Zedekiah. Under this king, the prophet was at once feared, counselled, and hated. The folk religion of the time held that Judah's God would come to the rescue as he had done

in the days of Deborah. Jeremiah put political causes for political events, looked at the situation as a calm statesman and urged the people and the government to come to terms with Chaldea. This only brought the charge of being pro-enemy, pro-Chaldean, against the prophet. He was accused of being unpatriotic, disloyal, and a menace to winning the war.

Finally, he was thrown into prison, where, like Paul at Rome, he received his friends. At this time, his country cousin, Hanamel came over from his native village and asked him to buy his land that his family might not fall victims to the wartime famine. Jeremiah's unconquerable hope came to the front; he bought the ground and declared that again farmers should go happily about their work. During this time, Zedekiah, always at his wits' end, alternately sought midnight, secret counsel from Jeremiah and had him thrown deeper into prison. He had during these eleven years but one advice to the king, "Surrender. It is better to be entirely subject to Nebuchadrezzar than to fight." The king could not bring himself to do this and in 586 Jerusalem fell to the dust from which it had been built. At last the people saw that Jeremiah had been right, but it was too late.

A few stayed beside the ruined temple and among them stood the old prophet. Nebuchadrezzar naturally gave him his choice of going or staying. To the king's point of view, he had been pro-Chaldean. To Jeremiah, however, the whole affair had been one of common sense and he never thought of being pro-anything. Here, then, comes a problem which the world war made acute again. How far should blind patriotism carry one? Jesus, certainly, paid little attention to local patriotism. He counted Roman tax collectors (EV "Publicans") among his friends and plainly told the people to pay tribute to the Latin Emperor. The "hundred percenters" of his time, of course, cried out for his death as they had done before in the case of Jeremiah. But, today, *theoretically* Jesus and Jeremiah have won. Let us not forget that in time theory becomes reality. If the spirit and purpose of these two ever come into practice, war will go the way of duelling, piracy, and witchcraft executions.

After a few days the survivors found it difficult to live amid the ruins and at the mercy of the new governor and the prowling wild beasts. They suggested to Jeremiah that they go as refugees to their Egyptian brothers. At last they decided to go and took the old prophet against his will. Here he died still

fighting to keep Yahweh enthroned in the hearts of the people instead of Ishtar, "Queen of Heaven."

II

THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF JEREMIAH

Ordinarily we think of Jeremiah in connection with the problem of patriotism. Is national independence the greatest good, the *summum bonum,* the greatest blessing? His work, however, did not center entirely on this problem. He was one of the greatest of the teachers of social ethics. Like his predecessors, he proclaimed the necessity of justice to all, including those generally forgotten, as widows and orphans, the moral obligation to be honest, and the social contract (marriage metaphor) which existed between Judah and its God.

On one occasion like Diogenes he searched the streets of the capital with a lantern for an honest man:

> Search the streets of Jerusalem,
> See and know;
> Seek in the market places
> To find a man,
> If there be one who does justly,
> A seeker for truth,
> Thus can I pardon the city.
>
> —Jeremiah 5:1.

His philosophy of society began with the individual. Only as honesty rules in the hearts of its citizens can any social organization survive. He never tried to convert people *en masse.* They had the requirements of their God engraved on their hearts. Obedience alone was necessary.

Because of his insistence on national and individual honesty, he was the first to become entangled in a social institution considered by all to be necessarily ordained by their holy law. This was during the reign of Zedekiah when Nebuchadrezzar besieged the city. A shortage of soldiers led the people to free their slaves in order that they might defend the city as members of the national guard. The Chaldean king, however, temporarily turned his attention to other cities in the south, and the Judeans promptly forgot their solemn pledge and reenslaved their new soldiers. In hot words Jeremiah denounced this trickery and falseness.

You repented on that day and did what was right in my eyes

in freeing every man his neighbor and you made a covenant with me in my temple. But you recanted and profaned my name. You enslaved again each man his male slave and his female slave which you had set free for the rest of their lives.—Jeremiah 34: 15-16.

But institutions are stronger than men and slavery survived. Not even did Paul have a word to say against it. Only in the principles of Jesus' *Way of Life* do we find a basis for the proper respect for personality. Jeremiah felt this, but his idea had to wait for him who came later.

III

NAHUM, PROPHET OF NINEVEH'S DOOM

Nahum, although a contemporary of Jeremiah, was unlike him in every way. We know nothing of his life except the note in the opening of his book which tells us that he was an "Elkoshite." This designation only makes him more uncertain. The natives in the little village of Al-Kush near Nineveh point out a tomb which they call Nahum's; but the tradition is worthless. Others think he came from Galilee because an ancient village called Elkosh is known to have existed there. Others claim southern Judah as his home and have equally good proof.

Again, Nahum was utterly unlike Jeremiah in his conception of prophecy. The latter, we have already seen, was in no sense of the word a nationalist and urged his own people not only to repent but also to put common sense and loyalty to their God above nationalism. Most likely Nahum (if they ever met) would have violently disagreed with Jeremiah. From all the evidence we possess, he was a most violent nationalist and identified his poetic-prophetic gift with patriotism. He cared for nothing so much as to see his people's enemy, the beautiful mistress of enchantment, cast down unwept and uncomforted. Little did he realize that others might have the same attitude toward his nation as had been shown by Nineveh!

Nahum gives us a fine example of the more primitive Old Testament idea of the judgment of God. Like a certain psalmist he hates "with a perfect hatred" the one who has been victorious. Nineveh had been no more barbarous or cruel than other cities or Israel itself when it came into Palestine and tried to exterminate the people and cattle. Nationalism always forgets its own history! The Assyrians, like Israel, had broken

all the laws of God and man. The catalog of Amos might have been read against their capital but the Tekoan included his own people. Not so Nahum!

This identification of nationalism with prophecy characterizes these dubbed "false prophets" by those like Jeremiah. It is the exception to find these men writing and Nahum stands almost alone. Undoubtedly, he was most popular in his time, and, while Jeremiah languished in prison, Nahum's poems incited the people to greater resistance. Of course, one was just as sincere as the other, but misguided sincerity can deliver no one.

Evidently Nahum disagreed with Amos, Hosea, and the other prophets or maybe he had never read them. Yet, how human he is. National pride is the easiest to wound and the most difficult to heal. Not all men can be Hoseas or Jeremiahs. "To err is human; to forgive divine." Jesus' message is permeated with Hosea and he loved to quote Jeremiah, but of Nahum he said not a word. This should be something of a guide for us. Certainly, Nahum's philosophy cannot heal the world as it is today. Jesus' *Way of Life* remains to be tried. To which do we more easily assent?

IV

HABAKKUK THE FORERUNNER OF PAUL AND LUTHER

We know only the name of Nahum's village but less than that of his contemporary Habakkuk. Of him we have neither home nor genealogy nor a Hebrew name. Perhaps he had become one of the people by adoption. Yet, in spite of all this, he has influenced the later thinkers by a single verse more than any other prophet. His book is as dramatic as it is brief. Only chapters 1-2 are from him and to these an editor has appended a psalm which is called chapter 3 in our English translations.

His one verse "the righteous shall live by his faith" would suffice to put him among the great of the earth had we no other line from him. Of this verse Professor Bewer[1] says: "We do not know how great Habakkuk's influence was upon his contemporaries, but on posterity it was far-reaching. Though he was but a spiritual disciple of the great prophet of faith, Isaiah,

[1] "Literature of the Old Testament," page 142.

and by no means as great as he, the formulation of the result of his profound soul struggle was so simple and pregnant that six centuries later Paul adopted it as most adequately expressing the answer to his own deep problem, and after another fifteen centuries Martin Luther found in it the light that illumined and liberated his soul. To each in his own way, as an answer to his own particular problem, came with pregnant meaning, different in each case, the great words,

"The righteous shall live by his faith."

Habakkuk was a contemporary of Nahum and Jeremiah. With them he saw Judah facing her end. The three were so different! Jeremiah, the teacher of the spiritual religion of the soul, the one who put God above patriotism, spent much of his life in prison and was despised and rejected of men. Nahum, the nationalist, cared for nought except to see the death of his enemies. Habakkuk, the philosophical, mounted his post to wait for God to answer his questions. They represent the three types you and I meet every day on the streets of America. The popularity of such men seems to be in inverse proportion to the distance from their graves.

TOPICS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

I. The last days of Judah.
What hastened the destruction of Jerusalem?
What would have been the probable result if Jeremiah's advice had been followed?
How would this have affected the history of (a) the world, (b) religion, (c) militarism?

II. Patriotism versus Nationalism.
Which in your opinion was a truer son of Judah, Jeremiah or Nahum?
What is Christian patriotism? Does it involve love and respect for other nations?
What does history show has been wrong with nationalism?
Is anything ever accomplished by a hymn of hate?

III. Social ideals and Judah's decline.
What symptom did freeing and then reenslaving the Judean slaves show as to the social conditions in Judea in its closing years?

Why did the survivors in Jerusalem wish to flee to Egypt? Why did Jeremiah prefer to remain by the ruins?

IV. Religion and Judah's Fall.

What is the origin of the worship of the "Queen of Heaven"?

Why did the common people readily forsake Jeremiah's teaching and return to the "Queen of Heaven" when calamity came upon them? Give similar examples in present-day folk religion.

Give in your own words the meaning of Habakkuk's creed. Why did this so influence Paul and Luther? How is it expressed today?

Discuss Nahum as a religious man. Did he make any contribution?

PART III

THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS

Chapter XI

Ezekiel, the Father of Judaism

In 597 Nebuchadrezzar carried the first Judean exiles to Babylonia. Among these was a young priest, Buzi's son, destined to become a prophet with a unique work. When he was born, or where, we do not know. It is most likely, however, that Jerusalem was his home and that he served in the temple. His birth also must have been in a time of trouble because his father gave the babe the name Jechezk-el which in Hebrew may be read to mean either God is strong or God strengthens. (The form Ezekiel comes to the English from the Latin Ezechielis.) Perhaps he was born about the time of the discovery of Deuteronomy. If this were so, his age at the time he was taken into exile would have been twenty-four and his inaugural vision which changed him from a priest to a prophet came when he was about twenty-eight. This is reasonable to believe.

First Day: Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision.

On June 5, 593 (B.C.), as I was among the exiles by the Chebar River, heaven was opened and I saw visions of God. . . . As I looked behold a mighty wind came from the north, a great cloud, and it had taken into itself fire so that light surrounded it. . . . Also from its midst came the likeness of four living beings; and their appearance was the form of a man. And each of them had four faces and four wings. The form of their face was that of a man's but on the right side the four had the face of a lion and on the left an ox's face and the four had also an eagle's face. . . . And above the firmament which was over their heads was something like a sapphire stone formed as a throne and upon the something that looked like a throne was something that looked like a man.—Ezekiel 1: 1, 4-6, 10, 26.

Thirty-one years ago some American archaeologists found evidence to locate the very place where Ezekiel saw his inaugu-

ral vision. Certain tablets verified the River Chebar as the grand canal of Nippur in Babylonia similar to the grand canal of Venice today. This is only one of many instances where archaeology confirms and reveals the Bible. Ezekiel thus was the first prophet who tells us that he wrote outside of Palestine and it is likely that he is the first who did so. The only cases in doubt, as we have already seen, are Nahum and Habakkuk and what evidence there is seems to point to Palestine as the home of both.

As he carefully locates his vision, so he accurately dates his writings. He, the son of Buzi, a priest, was carried to Babylonia in the first captivity in 597. Since he wrote in the fourth year and the fifth month, his date is approximately June 5, 593.

His vision came from the land of mystery, the north. He goes back to the old conception of God as riding on, or being carried by, a storm cloud. The rest of the imagery is difficult to describe because it was only a dream to the prophet. How could we vividly write out a vision? The four faces have, however, played a great rôle in Christian art. Above all is God's throne. The effect is somewhat similar to Isaiah's vision except for the fact that Ezekiel has introduced more Babylonian elements.

How does Ezekiel's method of dating and his geographical location compare with that of the other prophets so far studied? Why should all who want to understand the Bible be interested in and ready to support archaeology? Why have people of highest culture represented God in human form? Compare Paul's thoughts on representing God in Romans 1:22-23.

Second Day: The Call and Equipment for the New Life.

And when I saw and prostrated myself I heard the voice of the speaker and he said to me: Son of man, stand on your feet so that I may speak with you. Then came the Spirit into me and caused me to stand on my feet and I heard the one speaking to me saying: Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel. . . . And you, Son of man, listen to what I am telling you. Do not be contrary like this contrary people. Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you. So I looked and behold, a hand was stretched out to me and in it was a book roll. Then he

spread it out before me and it was written on both sides and on it were written lamentations, mourning, and woe. Then he said to me, Son of man, what you find eat. Eat this roll, then go, speak to Israel. So I opened my mouth and he made me eat this roll. And he said to me, Son of man, digest and fill your bowels with this roll which I am giving you. Then I ate it and in my mouth it was sweet as honey.—Ezekiel 1:28b; 2:1-3a; 3:1-3.

Ezekiel receives a command similar to the prophets before him, viz., to teach his own people. The late term "Son of man" is here used for the first time in the prophets. As in Psalm 8, it means human being, man. The Hebrew language as Arabic today says instead of man, son of man; for Israel, sons of Israel; for Arab, son of an Arab, etc. God, himself, asks the prophet not to grovel in the dust but to act as a man, stand up on his feet, in order that he may speak with him.

As a result of Deuteronomy, we have here a theory of inspiration. Ezekiel digests a book roll on which the teaching is written; all prophets before him received mental communications directly from God without any written material. The word of God is sweet in spite of the fact that its execution on the people means lamentation. The moral imperative, Ezekiel tells us, intellectually appreciated, gives joy; disobedience brings woe.

What is the meaning of the Semitic phrase *Son of man?* What new conditions do you see beginning to develop in the exile? What idea of inspiration does Ezekiel have? What do you understand by inspiration? Do you think Ezekiel's idea of inspiration is to be preferred to that of the pre-exilic literary prophets?

Third Day: Ezekiel's Method of Teaching the Exiles that Jerusalem would Fall.

Also, Son of man, take a clay tablet and put it in front of you and draw on it the city of Jerusalem; then place a siege against it and build a tower beside it and throw up a mound beside it and place camps beside and set up battering rams around it. Also take a plate of iron and set it as an iron wall between you and the city and face it and let it represent a state of siege and besiege it yourself. This is a sign for Israel.—Ezekiel 4:1-3.

Ezekiel's book begins at chapter four with a series of twenty chapters denouncing Israel's sin and predicting the sure punishment. The first object lesson to Israel is given in a valley joining the Grand Canal (3:22 ff.). The reason for this pantomime is this: The folk religion, in spite of Nebuchadrezzar's siege and the first deportation, yet held that Jerusalem could not be taken. Ezekiel shared the belief of Jeremiah and all the literary prophets that the city would fall. Hence, this dramatic representation of a besieged Jerusalem five years before the actual destruction came. The prophet played in the sand like a little child to impress the exiles who boasted that the home city and the folks back there were under the especial protection of God.

Ezekiel continually speaks of Babylonian objects. Here he uses a clay tablet on which to draw his picture as the Babylonians did. Go to any good museum and ask to see some of these clay tablets. The writing on them is called cuneiform (wedge shape) and is the development of the earliest known script. Such tablets have been excavated in large numbers and we have thousands which are centuries older than Ezekiel.

Try to visualize Ezekiel's "sign" to the exiles. How do you explain his action in playing with an object in the sand like a little Babylonian boy? How do you imagine the other exiles treated him for opposing so vividly their cherished religious belief?

Fourth Day: Each Individual Must Answer for His Own Conduct.

And Yahweh's word came to me as follows:
What do you mean by using this proverb in the land of Israel, saying,

The fathers eat sour grapes,
And the children's teeth become blunted?

As I live, says Yahweh, use this proverb no more in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the father is mine so is the son mine. Behold the soul that sins shall die.—Ezekiel 18:1-4.

Ezekiel here repeats to the exiles what he had heard from the lips of his contemporary, Jeremiah, in Jerusalem. (Jere-

miah 31:29-30.) This was before the young priest had received the prophet's call. Little had the imprisoned prophet dreamed that his persecution would bear fruit in Babylonia! Such is the unconscious influence of a noble soul.

The teaching in this passage seems natural and matter of fact to us. In 590 B.C., however, it was revolutionary radicalism. Israel had always felt the solidarity of the nation's life. The *nation* sinned and took its punishment, or the *nation* repented and received forgiveness. Now, so the prophets say, the nation must soon cease to exist as such; only individuals will remain. Some of these, too, must languish in exile, homesick and afraid; others among the ruins of the home city must lament their loved ones whom they can never see again. The old bonds have been broken and the immediate responsibility of the individual is declared. Every man must now decide his relation to God and must suffer the consequences. There is no hereditary guilt in the national sense. The sins of the fathers are no affair of his, nor must his children answer for his personal sins. Neither Jeremiah nor Ezekiel considered certain physical sins of people which the laws of nature often visit so terribly on innocent children.

What is the relation between history and religion which exists in the thinking of Jeremiah and Ezekiel concerning hereditary guilt? What sins of parents are by nature's laws visited upon innocent children? What would these prophets have said about the once beloved theological dogma of Adam's sin?

Fifth Day: The Death of Ezekiel's Wife.

And Yahweh's word came to me as follows:

Son of man, behold I am taking from you suddenly the Desire of your eyes. And you shall neither mourn nor shed tears. Mourn in silence; make no outcry for the dead. Wear your turban and sandals; do not cover your beard and the customary funeral bread do not eat. I talked with the people in the morning and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did just as I had been commanded. Then the people said to me, Won't you tell us why you are acting in this manner? So I said to them, Yahweh's word came to me as follows: Say to the House of Israel, thus says the Lord, Yahweh, Behold I am about to bring a curse on my sanctuary, the pride of your strength, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your souls; and your

sons and daughters whom you have left behind shall fall by the sword. Then you do just as I have done.—Ezekiel 24: 15-22a.

This is the most pathetic picture we have in all prophetic literature. The prophet shows his tender emotion; his love for his wife makes him tender toward the exiles to whom he usually shows no pity.

Ezekiel calls his wife by the name he gave her in the first days of their love, Desire of my eyes. He was a man capable of real, human feeling. A Palestinian is never afraid to show his emotion and when domestic love exists, it is without hypocrisy; when it does not exist, there is straightway a divorce. The pathos is here the more deep because the prophet cannot do what is everywhere customary in Palestine, viz., observe the proper mourning rites for his beloved wife. Friends and relatives visited the bereaved while he reversed the ordinary habits as to life and wearing apparel. Hired mourners lamented the dead with funeral dirges. These customs still prevail in Palestine.

Ezekiel must here silently endure his suffering as a *sign* for Israel. The exiles still believe in the inviolability of Jerusalem. The fall of the city will cause them great grief but they must bear it silently. Through his own bitter grief he vicariously teaches them.

One of the finest arts of life is the ability to bear grief. How is this true? What mourning customs have we inherited from the ancient days? What is the Christian attitude toward grief?

Sixth Day: The Vision of National Resurrection.

The hand of Yahweh came upon me and he brought me through his spirit and set me in the midst of the valley and it was full of bones. Then he caused me to pass through them and, behold, their number on the surface of the valley was very great and they were very dry. And he said to me, Son of man, can it be that these bones will live again? I answered, O Lord, Yahweh, you alone know. Then he said to me, Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear Yahweh's word, thus says Lord Yahweh to these bones, Behold I am causing spirit to enter among you and you shall live. And I will place sinews upon you and will bring upon you flesh and cover you with

skin and put breath in you and you shall live. Thus shall you know that I am Yahweh. So I prophesied just as I was commanded. Then there was a sound as I prophesied (behold it was as an earthquake!) and the bones came together, each bone to its mate. And I looked and behold, sinews were on them and flesh clothed them and skin covered them but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, Prophesy for breath, prophesy, O Son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says Lord Yahweh, From the four winds come, O Breath, breathe into these corpses that they may live. So I prophesied just as he commanded me and breath came into them and they lived and they stood upon their feet an exceedingly great multitude.

Then he said to me, O son of man, these bones are the whole of Israel. Note how they keep saying, Our bones are dry, our hope has gone and we are ruined. Therefore, prophesy and tell them, Thus says Lord Yahweh, Behold I am opening your graves; from your graves, O my people, will I bring you up and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.—Ezekiel 37: 1-11.

Ezekiel like the other prophets believed that eventually Israel would be nationally redeemed. The exiles, however, after the fall of Jerusalem had shattered their hopes, became pessimistic and likened themselves to a valley of dry bones. Taking his cue from their own words, "Our bones are dry, our hope is gone," he reveals to them that God can put life into dry bones just as easily as he put life into the world at creation. Of course, this applies here to Israel, the nation. The passage says nothing of individual resurrection.

The Hebrew language has but one word, *ruach,* which we render by three English words, breath, wind, spirit. In the Genesis account of man's creation, God breathed into him this *ruach* and he became a living being (soul). To the Hebrew the wind as it blew typified this power of the Divine. So in the New Testament, the spirit is the holy breath of God which was breathed upon the disciples.

This message must have cheered the downcast, homesick exiles. God is in control. He is mightier than Nebuchadrezzar and Chaldea's army. He alone has the life-giving spirit. Israel shall be redeemed.

What is the difference between a national and an individual resurrection?

Why do people become discouraged? What taught the exiles that their folk religion was false? Why had they not believed Ezekiel?

What was the Hebrew idea of Spirit. Why does the English language have three words to convey an idea which the Hebrew conveys in one?

Seventh Day: The Spiritual Regeneration of Israel.

Therefore tell the House of Israel: Thus says Lord Yahweh, Not on your account am I doing this, O Israel, on the contrary, I am doing it for my holy name which you desecrate among the gentiles wherever you are. I will make sacred my great name which is now profaned among the people because of you. And the nations shall know that I am Yahweh in manifesting my holiness through you before their eyes.

Then will I take you from the Gentiles and from all countries will I gather you; and I will bring you to your homeland. I will sprinkle pure water upon you and you shall be clean from all your impurities. I will also purify you from your idols. I will also give you a new heart and I will put within you a new spirit; then I will take away the heart of stone from your bosom and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit into you and I will cause you to follow my statutes and to keep and to practice my commands. Then shall you live in the land which I gave your fathers; and you shall be my people and I will be your God.—Ezekiel 36: 22-28.

If we are to understand this beautiful passage, we must try to appreciate its historical background. Ezekiel is in Babylon surrounded by Chaldean religion and culture. Israel is looked down upon as an inferior conquered people. Since national independence and a powerful deity were considered identical, the God of the Hebrews was now humiliated before the gods of Chaldea. His holy name has been profaned through Israel's defeat and exile.

The chief thing in religion to Ezekiel is *sacredness*. The moral character of the divinity, expressed by his name, must be venerated. If this sense of holiness is lost, religion ceases to be religion, the national unity disappears, and moral depravity characterizes the people. This sacredness can be restored to Israel only by the return already promised by all the

prophets. With the return, comes a moral and spiritual regeneration when the heart (i.e., the whole inner life) becomes responsive to God. The Divine Spirit is to be given also. This promise, which plays such a prominent part in the New Testament, comes with the post-exilic prophets. In Isaiah of Jerusalem the Messiah shares the Spirit but it does not dwell in the people.

The result of this regeneration will be obedience to the divine commands. Jeremiah's teaching underlies the thought of the new heart which beats in harmony with God. This conversion has two characteristics, first, the inner desire to fulfill God's commands, second, the power through the spirit to make the impulse a reality.

Try to picture Ezekiel's feelings as he saw the Hebrews looked down upon and their God's name desecrated by the Chaldeans. Why would such an experience be impossible today?

What was Ezekiel's idea of regeneration? What does the Hebrew mean by *heart?* What was the work of the Spirit in the pre-exilic prophets? What is the function of the Spirit in (a) Ezekiel, (b) the New Testament?

How does Ezekiel show the influence of Jeremiah?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

One rarely hears a student say that he loves Ezekiel. Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah interest everybody, but I have never heard anyone speak in glowing terms of the first exiled prophet. Those apart from the student class (students seem to be the only ones who must read him!) pay almost no attention to the book. Pastors refer in sermons only rarely to Ezekiel and the majority of people think of him as a cold, stern man who spent his life seeing impossible visions or scolding his homesick countrymen. In this week's study, I have tried to show the human side of Ezekiel (for he was intensely human!) and his sympathy and kinship with the other great literary prophets. Perhaps we shall yet all understand Ezekiel better; and I really believe that to know him is to love him. One day a student told his professor that he could not love Ezekiel. "But," replied his teacher, "at least you must respect him." As we review the week's work, let us ask ourselves which feeling we have for the man who silently suffered in exile and from his days of sorrow left us a unique book.

I

EZEKIEL'S BOOK

Ezekiel's book is different from that of any previous prophet. In the first place, it bears indisputable testimony to authorship. The prophet, himself, put his seal on each section. He wrote the book in the first person and his intensely individualistic style permeates and gives a peculiar integrity to the whole. In the second place, the book differs from all others in the matter of dates. He tells us in clear, unmistakable language that he happened to be among the captives taken by Nebuchadrezzar in 597 B.C., and that he was allotted to a home in Nippur on the Grand Canal (E.V. River Chebar). Here on a certain day in June, 593, he had a vision which changed him from a Zadokite priest to a prophet.

We must remember that this first deportation occurred eleven years before Jerusalem fell. The folk religion of the people expressed itself tenaciously in the dogma of the infallibility of the city and none of the peasants and common people doubted the received creed. Jeremiah had already suffered much because he openly declared the creed a false hope. Ezekiel agreed on all essential points with Jeremiah and especially emphasized the latter's belief that the city would fall. The homesick, disappointed exiles were in no frame of mind to hear this and Ezekiel's popularity was about the same as that of Jeremiah's after the latter's famous Temple Speech. The government, in this case, protected the exile and no harm could come to him except the dislike and personal annoyances extended by his countrymen.

In this environment he wrote and dated his book as follows: Chapters 1-24, addresses delivered before the fall of Jerusalem, 586; chapters 1-7, June-July, 593; chapters 8-11, August-September, 592; chapters 12-19, about 590; chapters 20-23, July-August, 589; chapter 24, December-January, 588-587; chapters 25-32, addresses dealing with foreign nations mostly delivered just before the fall of the city; chapters 33-39, addresses concerning the restoration of the people and their fatherland, after 586; chapters 40-48, the constitution for the new Judaism, 572.

It will at once be seen that the first two sections of his book follow the ordinary prophetic material. Every prophet spoke to his own people and either in a large or small degree to the

non-Jews. The last two sections of Ezekiel form his peculiar contribution. As pastor of the exiles he had first to comfort and restore their belief in a benevolent deity after the city's fall, which caused their loss of belief in the popular creed. Immediately after this he prepared his program for the future.

The peculiar thing in religion to Ezekiel, as we have seen, was the idea of sacredness, and this he put into the new constitution. Having been a Zadokite priest, he had the conviction that the new restoration could be perfected only on this principle. Yahweh must return to the temple to dwell in the midst of the people; but he could do this only when every precaution had been taken against the profanation of his holy name. (Cf. Seventh Day's reading.) To this end, the temple must be separate and apart, built upon a hill, properly walled in, and surrounded by courts. The very center, the farthest removed from all contaminating influences, was to be the holy of holies, the spot of the divine presence. Here Yahweh's throne was situated. The idea of architecture in these chapters (40-48) is thoroughly oriental. To this day the mosques and other religious buildings have preserved many of these ideas. Around the temple was an open space and farther away was the city. Formerly the king lived near the temple but this Ezekiel prohibited. Not the government but the duly consecrated priests should be most intimate with Yahweh. The people entered only the outer court.

Such was Ezekiel's program for the restored people. His ideas could never become international nor universal. His deity was the national God Yahweh; his architectural precautions against defilement again represent local ideas which other peoples would not adopt. Thus Ezekiel became the *Father of Judaism.* The Synagog today is his work. Visit one, study the service, and see the result of this man's ideas. But the Synagog will never become universal any more than any national section of the Christian Church. No localism can appeal to all men. Jesus' *Way of Life* lifted the religion of the prophets out of its localism, provincialism, and nationalism and made it universal. The tragedy today is that people insist on putting their localisms into Jesus' breadth of vision. They dishonor Him who so do. The author of the Gospel glories in Jesus' death having rent the veil in the temple. For the members of the New Movement, Ezekiel's architectural fittings meant nothing any more. The curtain was torn and men came to God (not the

Jewish Yahweh) in personal relationship (not by means of a Jewish priest). Just so the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares that Jesus has surpassed all laws, temple etiquette, priests and ceremony; harmony of interest, agreement, harmony, love shall rule the future in the spirit and under the leadership of Jesus.

II

Ezekiel's work and life illustrate the inseparable relation between history and religion. He served as pastor for the exiles at a turning point in Biblical history. Before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 the national consciousness and religious consciousness were identical; simply said, religion and nationalism were the same thing. For this reason the folk religion held tenaciously to the dogma of Jerusalem's infallibility. The fall of the city meant the collapse of the common people's religious belief. The security of the city signified the power of their national God; the victory of Nebuchadrezzar to the thought of the time showed the impotence of Israel's God and the power of the pantheon of Chaldea. What could the exiles do? Experience had proved that their creed was a delusion; their religion had not stood the pragmatic test (truth works).

Every creed ever composed represents the same relationship between history and religion. Creeds are of tremendous value for this reason. They reflect the thinking of the time when they were made. Naturally every reformer has trouble with them. The conservative mind stays with his ancestors; the progressive pays his homage to them by doing as they did, using his own mind in his own time. It is useless to argue about these two types; they are no more dangerous than are different colors of eyes or hair. They are just natural.

A unique charm of Ezekiel's thinking is the Babylonian influence. He writes his revelations and displays his pantomimes on clay tablets; the details of his visions represent Chaldean imagery. He must explain not only to the exiles but to Chaldeans as well that the Hebrew Yahweh is by no means inferior to the Chaldean Bel.

The imagery in the opening vision has influenced art to a great extent. Many artists have tried to represent to the eye this vision. Raphael's is the most famous. The "four living creatures" yet adorn the friezes of cathedrals and churches. They have been variously interpreted in the after time, follow-

ing John's Apocalypse, to represent the four Gospels. These fanciful interpretations fortunately today are kept only as architectural ornaments. When we see them on churches it is well to know the famous groupings of the two church fathers:

Irenaeus	*Saint Augustine*
lion—John	lion—Matthew
ox—Luke	ox—Luke
man—Matthew	man—Mark
eagle—Mark	eagle—John

Another point in Ezekiel's book which must not be overlooked is his use of the phrase *Son of man.* It is true, this phrase is the Hebrew and Aramaic way of saying man or human being. A good example is found in Psalm 8:4, where the parallelism brings out the meaning.

> What is man that you should regard him,
> Or the son of man that you should notice him?

In the later literature, that grew up between the time embraced by the Old Testament Canon and the formation of the New Testament Canon, this phrase often carried with it a technical meaning and sometimes meant Messiah (anointed ideal king). The Gospels use this as a name for Jesus. Scholars are by no means agreed as to the force of this name in the New Testament. It is very likely that Jesus called himself *Son of man* to identify himself with his fellow men, the better to teach them his *Way of Life.*

III

Ezekiel's conception of God is still that of the nationally-minded Jew. Yahweh has not yet become the god of the whole world. He still has a local home, Jerusalem. The new city is to be renamed Yahweh-Shammah, *Yahweh is there* (48:35). Is it any wonder that the Samaritan woman tells Jesus that his people teach that God is to be found in the Jewish mountain and her people on the Samaritan? Not yet have the prophets been sufficiently progressive in their thinking to substitute the word God (with a capital G) for the Jewish divinity Yahweh.

One step in this direction, however, we do find in Ezekiel. In Nippur the Chaldean gods surrounded. How could he reconcile their existence with the restoring, recreative power of Yahweh? Only one way opened to him and that was to make

these gods all ministers to the God of Israel. This he works out in his visions. A little later we shall find a great exiled poet denying the very existence of these other gods. Here we see an important development in folk religion. As the lesser divinities became degraded in rank they gradually sank to the estate of angels and other divine beings.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

I. The historical and geographical background of Ezekiel's work.
Locate on a map the place where Ezekiel lived.
Why did the Chaldeans take the people to this place?
Had the exiles carried on their normal ways of life in their exile?
What Babylonian ideas and symbolism do you find in Ezekiel?

II. The relation of history to religion.
What events told the people that their religious ideas were wrong? What convinced the people? Are people convinced today of the truth or falsity of their beliefs unless they have a similar proof?
In what sense is religious truth a personal matter?

III. Ezekiel's conception of God and man.
How does your conception of God differ from that held by Ezekiel? Why do you have another conception?
What is the origin of the idea of angelic beings?
How did Ezekiel localize God? How do we?
What was Ezekiel's idea of hereditary sin? What were the ideas held by John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards?
Did Jesus say anything about hereditary sin?

IV. General estimate of Ezekiel.
Do you like Ezekiel? Give reasons.
Do you find that a closer study makes you like him more or less?
How would you teach Ezekiel to your Sunday School class?

Chapter XII

Deutero-Isaiah, Prophet of Hope

About twenty years after Ezekiel had laid down his pen, an unknown prophet, living in exile, composed a series of poems on the restoration of his people. He was a contemporary of Cyrus (549-529), the conqueror of the Chaldean and Median Empires, and creator of the great Persian Empire. The fall of Babylon in 538 B.C., brought hope into the hearts of the exiles. Cyrus granted amnesty to all political prisoners and gave permission for any who wished to return to their home and gods. This act inspired the prophet to write the poems contained in chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah. It was merely by accident that this poet's work was bound into the roll of Isaiah of Jerusalem. The poets lived in different times and wrote about different men and acts. Because chance put into one roll these two men, they have been distinguished as Isaiah of Jerusalem (chapters 1-39) and Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40-55). Deutero means second and some scholars call him second Isaiah. The message of this great poet we shall study this week.

First Day: The Inaugural Audition.

A voice is saying, Proclaim.
I say, What shall I proclaim?
The answer comes back:
All mankind is grass,
All its beauty like a wild flower.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God remains eternal.

—Isaiah 40: 6-8.

Deutero-Isaiah (the word *Deutero* means *second* since chapters 40-55 comprise the second part of the book called Isaiah.

Cf. Deutero-nomy the second version of the law) never has a vision. God's method of communication to him is through the ear, aural; that is, he has auditions when other prophets had visions. Here a heavenly voice tells him to proclaim a message. He asks what he shall proclaim and the answer comprises the theme of his poems. Human power passes away soon, but God remains forever. He does not direct his message to any particular group of exiles nor to those who remained at home. He is the first prophet to write to the whole world. His message, accordingly, is universal and meant for Gentile as well as Jew. It would be interesting if we might know where this exile lived. Some exiles, as Ezekiel and John of Patmos, told their readers, but this sweet voice is too much interested in his great message even to mention himself.

The Hebrew idiom says, "All flesh is grass." Flesh in Hebrew and Aramaic means what we call mankind, people. The poet has observed the rising and falling of nations, the deadly effects of wars, the passing of his own friends, and from this he concludes that human life is frail. It is like a wild flower which soon fades. On the other hand, God and his word remain forever. God's word is equivalent to his purpose, and we shall see how this great world-purpose is to be worked out partly through Cyrus and partly through all mankind.

What do you understand by the term deutero as applied to Isaiah, chapters 40-55, and to the law?

Wherein does Deutero-Isaiah differ from all prophets studied up to this time? What does the prophet mean by Yahweh's breath? Why is his metaphor of human life's being a wild flower so apt?

Second Day: A Message of Hope to all the Jews.

Be comforted, be comforted, my people,
Says your God.
Speak lovingly to Jerusalem,
And proclaim to her
That her hostage is accomplished,
That her atonement is complete,
That she has received from the hand of Yahweh,
Double for all her sins.

—Isaiah 40: 1-2.

After his audition, the poet gives his first message to his own people. Part of them languish in exile, homesick and in despair. Psalm 137 gives us a picture of such a heartsick group:

By Babylon's canals
We sat and wept,
When we remembered Zion.
On the willows nearby,
We hung up our harps.

. . . . .

How can we sing Yahweh's song
In a foreign land?

Then he speaks to the humiliated ruin which once was the proud city of Yahweh. Speak to Jerusalem's heart is the Hebrew way of saying, Speak lovingly. Again, Deutero-Isaiah is the first prophet to speak thus. He never chides nor finds fault. Like Jesus in John's Gospel, he says, "Let not your heart be troubled." He gives complete forgiveness and says Israel has received twice as much punishment as it deserved.

The capture of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 completed Israel's period of exile. Eighty-four years had elapsed since the people of Samaria had been deported. The ten tribes had by this time been hopelessly lost in their assimilation with the Assyrians. Fifty-five years before Ezekiel and the first from Jerusalem had been carried to Nippur; and for forty-eight years Jerusalem had been a ruin. Now appears a hope on the horizon in the Persian Cyrus, who, reversing the method of the Assyrians and Chaldeans, permitted all exiles who wished, to return to their fatherland and their gods. He tried the new policy of cooperation instead of force, and sought to awaken in his subjects love and gratitude instead of fear. His method so surprised the people that they identified it with God's plan and hailed the Gentile Persian as Messiah of God. Deutero-Isaiah never tired of eulogizing him. He became the Jewish poet laureate of the Persian Empire.

What led Deutero-Isaiah to proclaim Israel's pardon, restoration and comfort? Give a description in your own words of the two classes of people to whom he wrote. What similarity do you find between his passage and John 14?

Third Day: The Road through the Desert.

A voice cries:
In the desert prepare
The way of Yahweh;
Make straight in the wilderness
A path for our God;
Every valley shall be lifted up,
Every mountain and hill brought low,
The uneven shall be levelled,
The rough made a plain.

Ascend a high mountain,
O proclaimer to Zion;
Shout the good news to Jerusalem,
Shout, be never afraid to
Say to the cities of Judah
Look, here is your God!

Behold Yahweh is coming in might,
With his own arm is he wielding power.
Look, his reward is with him,
And his recompense with him too.
As a shepherd he cares for his sheep,
He collects them himself in his care;
The lambs in his bosom he carries,
And gently guides those that give suck.

—Isaiah 40: 3-4, 9-11.

This beautiful audition not only brought cheer to the people in Jerusalem and in exile, but has permeated music, art, and literature to such an extent that every generation is nourished by it. It inspired Handel's great oratorio, "The Messiah." The picture is as truly oriental as it is beautiful. The first stanza is geographical. Between Jerusalem and Mesopotamia stretches the great Syrian desert. How could the poor disheartened exiles pass over it even after Cyrus granted permission? One way only was open. God in his power could build a highway. The word *misillah* is used, which meant a wide, military road such as the Assyrians constructed for their armies. But God's power surpasses that of the greatest roadbuilders. He will elevate the valleys and bring down the mountains to make a plain. Over this new roadway the tired exiles will return. The second stanza tells of the poet's command to ascend the highest summit in the country of his exile to proclaim to Jerusalem and

the other cities the good news. The word for the message in the Hebrew represents the same idea as found in the Greek word which gives us *gospel*. The third stanza shows us the procession as it nears Jerusalem. In the Orient, the shepherd walks before his flock and they follow. So here Yahweh leads the people himself. He has with him the reward which the people are to receive for their sufferings. Deutero-Isaiah never hints that the people had to suffer all these things as a result of their sin. For half the sufferings they shall receive the martyr's crown. In Palestine every evening as one watches the flocks return, a familiar sight is to see a shepherd carrying on his shoulders a little lamb with the bleating mother close to him. The poet describes this daily scene giving the tender love to Yahweh who carries the tired little ones in his arms with the mothers following close to him. Our idea of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, comes from this poet, who influenced the author of the Fourth Gospel.

Read Matthew 3 : 3, punctuating correctly, thus: The voice of one crying, "In the wilderness" etc. In what sense can this quotation apply as here intended?

Tell in your own words the difficulties of homeless exiles crossing the great Syrian desert and the prophet's belief as to the possibility.

The next time you see a church window representing Jesus as a good shepherd, visualize this passage and think of the historical and geographical origin of the idea. Why would this picture appeal more quickly to an oriental than to an American?

Fourth Day: Cyrus, the Gentile Messiah, Israel's Deliverer.

Thus says Yahweh:
Confirming the word of his servant,
Accomplishing the counsel of his messengers,
Telling Jerusalem she shall be inhabited,
The temple's foundations be laid,
And Judah's cities be rebuilt:
Yes, I will restore her ruins.
He says to the sea, be dry,
And to the rivers, I will dry you up.
He says to Cyrus, He's my friend,
My purpose shall he completely perform.

Thus says Yahweh to Cyrus, his Messiah,
His right hand have I strengthened,
To conquer before him the Gentiles.

—Isaiah 44:26; 45:1.

The poet here again emphasizes the plan and purpose of Yahweh. Jerusalem shall be rebuilt with the temple, and the outlying cities shall also be restored. The road through the desert is again mentioned. But how is all this to be accomplished? Strange as it must have seemed to all who read his poems, the prophet declares that Yahweh has called Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon, to be his Messiah. The idea was so unheard of, that even some modern scholars think that Cyrus' name must have been inserted by a scribe. A Gentile Messiah! A Persian and not related to David! From Persepolis and not from Bethlehem! The prophet contradicts every item that the people had ever heard about the Messiah. He stands all alone. He interprets what he finds in history and in the life of the nation and draws one conclusion: God is the creator of history just as he is of the world; He uses men as instruments to work out his will. Such a man is Cyrus, who permits the people to return to rebuild the city. The new age and new society shall be made possible by the Messiah. Cyrus makes all the plans real, therefore he is (regardless of his being a Gentile!) the Messiah.

The nationalists indeed were grateful to Cyrus, but not one accepted Deutero-Isaiah's belief in his Messiahship. His favors they accepted, but to rate a Gentile on an equality of such rank they never did. We may be sure that the exiled poet suffered the reproaches of his countrymen for daring to stand alone in his conviction. Later on Paul endured even greater persecution for daring to put Gentiles on an equality with the Jews. Except for the bold faith of such men as the exiled poet and Paul of Tarsus we might today be living in the mental darkness of those who identified national feeling with religion.

What new idea did Deutero-Isaiah bring to the teaching of the Messiah? What events led him to this conclusion? Why did his contemporaries disagree with him? What was the Messianic teaching of Isaiah of Jerusalem (chapters 1-39)? Where did Paul get Old Testament evidence for his belief in God's calling Gentiles?

Fifth Day: The Foolish Way of the Idol Maker.

To what will you liken God?
Or what image will you compare to Him?
An image? A carpenter made it;
And the goldsmith plated it with gold.
Each worker helps the other,
And congratulates his brother.
The carpenter encourages the goldsmith
And the polisher encourages the blacksmith
Saying of the soldering, It's good,
Then nails it fast lest it move.

The man who carves an idol of wood,
Selects a tree that will not rot;
Then he chooses a skillful carpenter
To set up an idol not to be moved.

—Isaiah 40: 18 ff.; 41: 6 ff.

Deutero-Isaiah's conception of Yahweh furthered the highest teaching of the literary prophets. Yahweh is now becoming the God of the whole world. He is creator and sustainer of the universe and all that is in it. In comparison with him the work of men's hands, idols, images, and all representations of the deity are only signs of man's ignorance of the real nature of God and his inability to understand his character. In this satire on the manufacture of a god, the poet tries to make his readers see the foolishness of what they do. The absurdity of comparing a piece of carved wood to the Creator of the world! Why, one can hear the carpenter and his fellow-workers joking one another as they do their work! Where is the moral majesty in an image? Who can reverence something without character?

Deutero-Isaiah is the first prophet we find who understands the philosophy of monotheism. If there be a creator, he must be the ruler, the one sovereign power. How ridiculous then to compare him with a piece of decorated wood that must be nailed up to keep it in place! Such gods are no more than their images. Yahweh can have no image; He is personality. The Genesis account of creation is in the poet's mind. Man is the only representation of God.

This exalted conception was far beyond the comprehension of the popular folk or priestly religion of the day. The common

people could not accept a God who included all men in his creation. They loved their local deity as did the surrounding nations. It seemed a breach of patriotism to extend the conception of their God to include other peoples. The influence of the prophet, however, grew and gradually and unconsciously the people adopted it. As a result of this new conception there came the beginning of the missionary movement. If there is to be *one God,* the other peoples must learn to know of Him. We shall study this again when we come to Servant, the first missionary, and the Book of Jonah.

How did the Hebrew God, Yahweh, become the God of the whole world? What part in this did Deutero-Isaiah have? Why does folk religion persist in representing God? In what way is *man* the *image of God?*

Sixth Day: Deutero-Isaiah, the First to Deny the Existence of All Other Gods.

Let them appear and tell us
What is going to happen;
Or tell about the past,
That we may lay it to heart;
Or let us know the future,
Tell us what is coming.

Yes, tell us the future,
That we may know you are gods;
Or do good or evil,
That we may see and marvel together.

Behold you are nothing,
Likewise your acts are nothing,
It's an abomination to choose you.

—Isaiah 41:22-24.

As we saw in the last reading, Deutero-Isaiah was the first prophet to explain the real meaning of monotheism. Ezekiel had degraded the gods of the other nations to the rank of servants of Yahweh, but Deutero-Isaiah identified them with their wooden images and pronounced them as *nothing.* For the first time, he declared the unity of God, the very foundation of the higher religion.

The prophet's complaint against the foreign gods is their

complete inactivity as compared with the creative power of Yahweh. They can neither tell what happened in the past, nor can they predict what is to happen in the future. To him, prediction is a proof of knowing the truth, and Yahweh alone has the power to predict correctly the future.

Soon after this time, the leaders of religious thought among the Hebrews began to write god with a capital G. The local name Yahweh fell into disuse and the word Lord was substituted for it. In this way monotheism spread and became the basis on which Jesus developed his *Way of Life*. It would have been impossible to have produced a universal religion which worshiped a local, national god. Thus Deutero-Isaiah proved to be one of the greatest among the contributors to religion.

How would you explain monotheism to one who had been educated as a polytheist? What satisfies your own mind as to the existence of one supreme God? How did Deutero-Isaiah give a philosophical reason for the first and second commandments? Why have conditions of thought so changed that instead of warning people against having too many gods, today many people are too indifferent to care for any at all?

Seventh Day: Deutero-Isaiah's Conception of Israel as Servant of Yahweh.

You, Israel, are my servant,
You, Jacob, I chose,
The seed of my beloved, Abraham.
I brought you from the ends of the earth
And from the corners I called you.
I said, You are my servant
Chosen and not cast away.
Fear not because I am with you,
Be not afraid, I am your God.
Fear not, you worm of a Jacob;
Fear not, O Israel.
I will help you, says Yahweh,
Your Redeemer is Israel's Holy One.
Hear, O you deaf ones,
Look, O blind ones, to see.
Who is as blind as my servant?
Or deaf as my messenger I send?
Listen then, Jacob, my servant,
O Israel, whom I have chosen.

Thus said Yahweh who formed you,
Who first made you and helped you,
Fear not, O Jacob, my servant,
You Jeshurun, my chosen.
—Isaiah 41:8-10a, 14; 42:18-19; 44:1-2.

Deutero-Isaiah believed Yahweh to be the God of the whole world, the Creator of all peoples, the director of Cyrus and the Persians as well as of the Jewish exiles. What relation then could exist between "the chosen people" and the universal God? The prophet holds the orthodox position in regard to God's having favored the Jews. We in our age must change our thinking radically to appreciate this deep conviction of the Jews.

The prophet looks at Israel's history and is reminded of the desert wanderings. God called them from the ends of the earth, but why has he arbitrarily chosen Jews rather than Assyrians or Egyptians or any other people? (We must not forget that these other peoples each felt its own superiority as much as did the Jews!) Deutero-Isaiah is the first to answer this question as he is the first to ask it. God chose the Jews because he wanted them for his servant people, to work for him, fulfill his mission in the world.

Again the prophet lacks that national conceit which so many of his contemporaries felt. Israel is a worm, blind and deaf. His own blindness let him be made captive; his deafness keeps him from hearing the commands of his God. Nevertheless, Israel should not fear. God is patient and love is his character. He knows the poor, blind, deaf worm because he made him. Even before Israel came into being, God was aware of him.

What is Deutero-Isaiah's conception of Israel's place in God's world plan? What characteristics has Israel which the prophet points out? How does God use the Persians?

What caused the Jews to believe they were the most favored of God? Do Christians who have the anti-Semitic complex dishonor God in their refusing to love his "chosen people"? What have the modern nations inherited from the Jews?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

None of the prophets had more influence than Deutero-Isaiah. This has been overlooked as the unknown poet lies hidden in the large book called after Isaiah of Jerusalem. His contributions,

however, were taken up and expanded by one teacher after another until they received their perfection in Jesus and Paul. Let us review these contributions to the world religion of today.

I

Like Paul, Deutero-Isaiah wrote for Jews first, but also for Gentiles. His audience embraced mankind, not single individuals as in chapters 1-39. We must not forget that he lived in exile and had to send his words of comfort, unlike the prophets who addressed their hearers in person.

Primarily he is a comforter. Neither does he upbraid Israel nor chide him unnecessarily. He is content in the conviction that Israel has suffered more than enough to pay for all his sins. His tribulations should now cease, and since God is just, a proper reward will be given. This reward is God's raising up a Gentile deliverer who is to be known as Messiah. He will grant release to the exiles; then God will construct through the Syrian desert a military road and Israel shall go home. But this is all God's doings. He directs Cyrus. He must work through men.

Nothing is too vast for God. He is the Creator and therefore guides, directs, controls what he has made. The breadth of view of this poet is unsurpassed anywhere in Biblical Literature. His is the only view of history that satisfies a religious mind. There is no "absentee landlordship" about his God. Every act of history is the outgrowth of God's plan and will. His teaching harmonizes with the Christian view of life perhaps more than any other Old Testament writer. What he failed to work out, a pupil of his accomplished, as we shall see in next week's study.

Deutero-Isaiah's teaching grew out of his interpretation of the events of his day. It is as though some far-seeing man of today, filled with the spirit of Jesus, should speak fearlessly concerning war, nationalism, racial prejudice, religious bigotry, and the social corruption of our time in such a way that people would everywhere feel him to be a leader. They might hate his unselfishness in proportion to their love of greed, his sense of brotherhood in proportion to their narrow nationalism, but nevertheless they would feel that he must be imitated and followed. We wait for such a man. Deutero-Isaiah cared only for God, he never wrote for money, and so he could interpret events fearlessly.

The prophet's national feeling did not limit him. True, he held the view of his time about Israel's being chosen, yet he fearlessly pointed out his people's blindness and spiritual stupidity. Doubtless, he was attacked by many of his contemporaries as unpatriotic, just as any man who dares to tell the truth about his nation today becomes the target of all the patriotic hypocrites of his party. The other prophets had a like experience. Their books have recorded some of these false brothers who made trouble for them. We find no such disturbers in Deutero-Isaiah's book because he, like John the Revealer, was alone in exile. Those who disagreed with him had no opportunity to be recorded in his book since they had no way of attacking him personally.

II

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE UNIVERSAL GOD

Our cherished belief that God is the Savior of all mankind first found expression in Deutero-Isaiah. No longer could the Universal God dwell in the Jerusalem imagined by Ezekiel, nor could Mount Sinai be the seat of his moral power. He is now enthroned above the Universe.

> He is the One who sits so far above the earth's circle
> That its inhabitants seem like grasshoppers;
> He it is who stretches out heaven as a curtain,
> And spreads it out as a tent in which to dwell.
>
> —Isaiah 40:22.

We need only refer (as we have before) to that important passage in John's Gospel where the Samaritan woman says to Jesus, "Our ancestors worshiped God in this mountain (she points to Mount Gerizim which towers over the well) but yet you Jews say that the place where folks ought to worship God is at Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Believe me, the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain (i.e., Gerizim) nor at Jerusalem. . . . God is spiritual, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in sincerity."

In the spring of 1923 I stopped at the well and then climbed Mount Gerizim where the Samaritans offered their Passover to their God in the firm belief that they ought to worship "on this

mountain." About the same time the orthodox Jews celebrated their Passover in Jerusalem, just as sure that their God desired their worship "at Jerusalem." The Muslim made their pilgrimage to Mecca equally confident that their God desired their worship at Mecca. The Christian world seemed to be emancipated from this form of dogmatism, but, at the same time, Christians were quarreling with each other over just as foolish a matter—creeds. The ill feeling engendered among Protestant sects and Roman and Greek Catholics over their creeds is no more excusable in the sight of God than the hatred among Samaritans, Jews, and Muslims over their holy cities. We must all go to school to Deutero-Isaiah.

The God extolled by the exiled poet is more anxious to save and restore than he is to punish. He redeems the Persians by making their Emperor his Messiah. Through this redemption the nations learn that their gods are *nothings*. Of Cyrus he says:

> From the North have I raised one, and he is coming,
> From the East I have called him by name.
>
> —Isaiah 41:25.

and of the Persians' gods:

> But among their gods is no counsellor,
> Behold they are all nothing,
> Their doings are vanity and nothing,
> Their molten images are wind and confusion.
>
> —Isaiah 41:28 ff.

Chapter I of Ezra relates Cyrus' confession of belief in Yahweh as "the God of heaven." It is most likely that Cyrus admitted Yahweh into his great cathedral. His attitude of toleration toward his provincial subjects extended also to their religions. Deutero-Isaiah regarded Cyrus as a worshiper of the true God.

Deutero-Isaiah represents God's government as strictly oriental, an absolute rule. He exercises His power as He chooses. Man has nothing to say. The Israelites may object to a Persian Messiah, but their objections are no more than wind. This power and control come as the result of God's creation. His illustration of man as a potsherd shows the futility of man's effort at readjustment.

> Alas for him who contends with his Creator!
> A mere potsherd among the potsherds of the earth!
> Does clay say to the potter, What are you doing?
>
> —Isaiah 45:9.

Yet the love and tender care of the shepherd characterizes this rule of God. To his servants he promises,

> I will pour out my spirit upon your children
> And my blessing upon your offspring.
>
> —Isaiah 44:3.

Jesus emphasizes this message in his teaching of earth's new state of society which we ordinarily call the Kingdom of God.

> Thy Kingdom come
> Thy will be done
> On earth as it is in heaven.

This sums up the human yearning for the king who at the same time shall be a shepherd. To men in the ancient times, it was impossible to think of government without a supreme ruler. The chaos which attends home-rule experiments, democratic growths and communistic trials meant to them revolution. The entire teaching of the Bible is that God is in control. He is neither the head of a democracy to whom the referendum and recall or impeachment may apply, nor is he an associate with any other power. He is the Creator and so necessarily the supreme, omnipotent, sole ruler. This conception lies in the Lord's prayer.

III

ISRAEL AS THE SERVANT OF YAHWEH IN DEUTERO-ISAIAH

Israel's heritage from the most distant past had brought the firm conviction that he had been chosen arbitrarily by God. Other nations existed only as horrible examples and warnings for Israel, or as servants to do the work of the chosen people. Experience, however, proved the contrary. But—do people let experience teach them anything? At least, they did not in Israel. For this reason the prophets were martyred. The masses never think, they follow the painless leader. The false prophets always have large followings; they do not compel the

people to analyze situations nor to reason the whence or wherefore of things. Even today, the biblical prophets, including Jesus, are more celebrated than obeyed.

Deutero-Isaiah, like all his contemporaries, had been brought up to consider his people as God's favorites. All other nations, so his parents and teachers taught him, were heathen and Gentile. Then came actualities in the cruel experiences of the world. Assyria carried off the northern tribes—ten of the twelve. Next Chaldea besieged Jerusalem till the south went the way of the north. Among the captives went our young poet, idealist, prophet. He tried to reconcile dogma with experience, creed with current events. No explanation came to his hungry soul. At last he broke with the past and its traditions. He interpreted history, keeping the general form of the popular belief.

God has chosen Israel. Why? History seems to show that He has rather favored Assyria, Chaldea, and now Persia. Israel has been humbled before each, not to speak of Egypt, Philistia, and the other tribes. But the people believe Israel has been chosen. Well and good! The reasons must be found.

Then Deutero-Isaiah received through his inner God-given consciousness a revelation destined to change the world. It was this: God chose Israel to be his slave not merely to receive his favor. What a blow to the popular patriotic pride! It was a good thing for the prophet that he lay in exile. He surely would have been stoned to death by his angry people. As a matter of fact, probably he was. We have no record of his death, and the teaching of Israel's place in God's plan seems to be the culmination of his life's work. But whatever happened to his physical life, his teaching lived on and in the person of one of his pupils reached its great climax in the Servant Songs.

Briefly stated, Deutero-Isaiah kept the shell of the old teaching and put into it a new soul. He retained the form but changed the content. Israel was chosen—but for a totally different reason from what people believed. It was, however, only natural for the little Palestinian provinces to think that God loved them more than the peoples whom they themselves did not like. Americans do the same; so do the French and Japanese and the South Sea Islanders. But this prophet refused to make the God of the Universe think as did the narrow-minded nationalists of his day.

Deliberately he pointed out Israel's faults. Just look at a people supposed to be favorites of the Creator of the world! What do you see? A worm. More than that, Israel is blind, dumb, plundered, despised by the other nations and full of sins. Nevertheless, there is hope.

Be comforted, be comforted, my people,
Says your God.

Israel has been punished fully. Forgiveness has come with protection in order that the message of the Eternal Creator may be known to all men.

The prophet's belief has blessed the world. Israel was chosen to teach the sons of men everywhere that God demands a religion based on morality. Persia, too, was chosen to help in the evolution of the human race. Greece taught the world philosophy and art; Rome showed men how to make laws. God chose all nations. For what has he chosen America?

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

I. Deutero-Isaiah's teaching about mankind.
What is man's origin? How far can man argue with his Creator?
What purpose is there in the creation? Do we think of people in terms of their practical use to us?

II. Loyalty.
Which is nobler, loyalty to a group or to mankind?
How did Deutero-Isaiah justify his combating so many of the ideas of his time?

III. Religion and History.
Why did Deutero-Isaiah formulate his teachings from the events of his time?
What would be a modern analogy to a Persian Messiah?
Would your answer shock any modern nation less than the prophet shocked Israel?
What did the exile mean to Deutero-Isaiah?
What meaning did he give to Israel's call?

IV. Monotheism.
Is monotheism an issue today?
What did Deutero-Isaiah add to the conception of God?
How did Jesus' teaching fulfill that of all the prophets regarding one God?

V. General Review.

How did Isaiah 40-55 come to be called Deutero-Isaiah?
Why did he teach a gospel of comfort?
Can people be punished more than they ought?
What did the prophet call idols and images? Why?
Do you believe people are chosen as servants of God?
In what way has every nation taught the world something about God?

Chapter XIII

The Servant Songs

Embedded in the poems of Deutero-Isaiah are four poems which tell in a dramatic manner the life, teaching, and sacrificial death of the first man to devote himself unreservedly to unselfish helpfulness. The man's name has come down to us as *Servant*. We have studied Deutero-Isaiah's conception of Israel, the nation, as Servant of God. Sometime later the idea was used to apply not to the nation but to one individual in the nation. The Servant Songs are found as follows: 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12. The style in which they are written is quiet, dignified, gentle, and intensely dramatic. Read together they tell a continuous story of purity, endurance, and suffering which end in a vicarious death. Not till after Servant's release from his misunderstood mortal life, do the nations begin to understand him. These poems in the time of their popularity were sung, and so should properly be known as the Servant Songs.

THE DRAMA OF SERVANT

First Day: God Speaks.

Behold my Servant! Him I uphold,
My chosen, in him my soul has joy;
My very own spirit in him have I put,
True religion shall he bring to the nations.

He shall not shout, nor cry aloud,
In the street his voice shall not be heard,
A bruised reed he shall not break,
A smoking wick he shall not quench.

Faithfully he extends the true religion.
He is neither tired nor is he depressed.
He shall yet establish true religion in the world,
And for his teaching the far isles wait.

—Isaiah 42:1-4.

This is the first act in the Servant Drama: God, the Creator, speaks. We note here one of the characteristics of Hebrew dramatic literature. The name of the speaker is never directly announced; the context tells who he is.

The *Chosen* here is called *Servant;* he is a new character but is the incarnation of an old idea. Briefly, the history of God's chosen had been: Israel, the true prophets, Cyrus, and now an unknown teacher called Servant. In the after ages, another is to receive the title, viz., Jesus of Nazareth.

The work of Servant is to bring *mishpat* into all the world. We have studied the meaning of this word before. It means *all that God requires of a man.* In these songs it is the equivalent of what we mean by true religion, and I have so translated it throughout this chapter. Servant's way of teaching is just the opposite of the old *nabis,* who were always noisy. His method is that of the teacher rather than the militarist; and all the world waits for him. The distant isles add the bit of romance to the poem. The Hebrews feared the sea with its monsters. They had heard travelers tell of far away islands, but to them they existed only as faith is the evidence of things not seen.

How does Hebrew dramatic literature differ from modern drama?

Tell the way the title "chosen" has been successively applied to different people. Why has the title perfect fulfilment in Jesus?

What was Servant's work? How was he to teach? Did Jesus conceive of his teaching in this way? What is the meaning of distant isles in this poem?

Second Day: Servant Speaks.

Listen, O Isles, unto me
And hear, O peoples afar,
Yahweh from birth has called me,
Before birth he remembered my name.

As a sharp sword has he made my mouth,
In the shadow of his hand has he hid me;
He has made me a polished arrow,
In his quiver has he concealed me.

And he said, You are my Servant,[1]
The one whom I have chosen.
I was honored in the eyes of Yahweh,
And my God became my strength.
—Isaiah 49: 1-3, 5b.

In the second song Servant calls on the isles of the sea to hear him. His words remind us of Jesus' in the Gospels: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Servant like Jeremiah feels that God called him before his birth to be his instrument for the spreading of the glad tidings. Like the literary prophets he is to be the messenger of peace. "As a sharp sword has he made my mouth." This means that his message, his teaching, is to replace the old method of force. Servant is not to be a warrior but a teacher who teaches in quiet. Long afterward Socrates, Plato, and Jesus all taught in this way. But at this time the idea was quite new. All before Servant who had been esteemed had been warring conquerors who came after much killing with a laureled brow and a bloody sword. Servant rebels against this. Unlike the warriors before him, he trusts not in armor but in God. "In the shadow of his hand" is characteristic of Hebrew poetry. He finishes his poem by quoting his God's own words to support his own previous assertion. In this way he was honored in God's eyes and his strength became the great reality of the whole drama.

Compare Jesus' calling on the people to listen with Servant's appeal.

Read the first chapter of Jeremiah and find as many similarities between the two as you can.

How does Servant show his dislike for the old idea of force and might? What is his moral equivalent for armor and weapons of war?

What is the source of Servant's strength?

Third Day: Servant and God Speak.

Then said I, In vain have I labored
Fruitless and to no effect have I used my strength.
Nevertheless, my justification was with Yahweh,
And my activity with my God.

[1] An ancient scribe here added the word Israel, thinking of the older idea of only Israel as a nation's being chosen. The added word breaks the meter of the original. It is not found in all manuscripts but was in the manuscript from which our English Version was translated.

And now thus said Yahweh,
Who formed me at birth for his servant, for
The returning of Jacob to him,
And the gathering to him of Israel;
Too little a thing[1] is the restoring of Jacob's tribes,
And the leading back of the preserved of Israel,
Therefore I give you as a light to the nations,
To be my salvation
To the end of the earth.

—Isaiah 49: 4-6.

Servant experienced the human feeling of discouragement. One day he looked at life and saw no result of all his work, ambition, and hope. For a moment he cried out in despair, but only for a moment. His faith in his God could not fail him. He felt that God had led him; and that God could not make a jest of his unselfish ambition and still be God. This is one of the great consolations of Religion. To all of us someday the sun will go out of the sky; despair will take the place where hope and joy ruled supreme, and happiness will seem to have fled. Then if we can cry out from the utter depths and be sure that God hears, our reason will be saved and we shall know as did Servant so long ago that our justification is with God. God demands only that *we* do what is right and leave the result to him.

Yahweh's never failing answer comes. He makes clear to Servant that his life's desire is being answered but in a manner different from what Servant expected. Even greater things lie in God's heart than in Servant's desire for the redemption of Israel. How often we, too, feel like rebelling against God when he is only answering our prayers in a way we did not expect. God's plan for Servant is world wide. He is to carry light, which in these songs, signifies the true religion, to the nations. God can no longer be considered the God of the Jews alone. Servant is thus the first missionary of the glad Evangel.

Have you ever felt utter discouragement and then turned to prayer and found consolation?

Do you pray with a definite idea of just how God should answer your prayer? Should we not expect God to have larger plans for us than we imagine?

[1] An ancient scribe added as an explanation of "too little a thing" the words "being my servant."

Fourth Day: Servant Speaks.

The Lord Yahweh has given me
The tongue of his learned ones,
To know how to give the doubter reply.
Morning by morning he wakens my ear
To hear as his other disciples.
Neither was I rebellious,
Nor apostate did I turn.
My back I gave to the smiters,
And my cheek to the hairpluckers;
My face I did not conceal
From insults and from spittle.
But Yahweh, my Lord, helps me,
Therefore have I not been conquered;
So I set my face like flint,
And I know I shall not be ashamed.
Near is my Justifier. Who shall attack me?
Let us stand up together.
Who is my accuser?
Let him come near to me.
Ah, my Lord, Yahweh helps me,
Who is he that condemns me?
Behold all of them like a garment have fallen apart,
A moth destroys them.

—Isaiah 50: 4-9.

In this, the third of the songs, Servant reaffirms his faith in God in the midst of bitter and cruel persecutions. The insults heaped upon Servant are characteristically oriental; scourging the back, pulling the beard (the oriental mark of manhood), slapping and spitting in the face. In the aftertime these same indignities were applied to Jesus, who bore them in the spirit of Servant.

Servant here gives two new blessings which come as a result of his fellowship with his God. The first is eloquence of speech befitting a disciple of God. All along, Servant has insisted that his method is that of teaching, not the old way of the sword and force of arms. Again this was perfected in the quiet, simple teaching of Jesus who always opposed force of any kind.

The second blessing is that of the continuous revelation from God. Every morning Servant's ear is awakened by the divine call. This nearness of God, this practicing the presence of God, is again distinctly oriental. Much more than in America or Europe one sees in the Orient everywhere people at prayer or

meditating on their sacred books. To such devotions Servant here is referring. From this he receives daily new revelations, instructions, and directions for his life. This is something we all need—the practice of the presence of God. So many people go on the assumption that God spoke once long ago to some holy men and ever since has been silent. Others hold a sort of *absentee landlordship* idea of God. They believe He created the world and set the processes of nature going, but then He left it as one winds a clock and goes away. Both of these ideas are false. They leave people stranded and alone in a weary world. Servant and Jesus both taught just the opposite ideas about God. They told of a God who worked in the beginning, works now, and always will work. The God of Jesus reveals himself daily to his praying children everywhere exactly as He did to Servant.

Under what kinds of persecution did Servant come? Why were Jesus' persecutions the same? What attitude did each have and why?

What is Servant's teaching about the constant revelation of God? How does this differ from that of many people today? What is Servant's equivalent for the old method of force? In what way was Jesus like Servant?

Fifth Day: Yahweh Speaks.

Behold, my servant shall prosper,
He shall be lifted up and very high;
Just as many men were astonished at him,
So shall he startle many nations.
Kings shall shut their mouths at him,
For what has been told them, shall they see,
And what they have not heard, shall they understand.

—Isaiah 52: 13-15.

Yahweh now speaks describing the exaltation of Servant. In the next section of the poem there is a more minute description of the final glory of the unselfish man who freely gave himself for others. Servant's mission is not only to individuals, i.e., to Israel, but also to the kings and nations of the Gentiles.

The great exaltation of Servant lies in the fact that "kings shall shut their mouths at him." This, to an oriental, meant something entirely out of the ordinary because reverence and

obedience supreme were paid to kings. No one was permitted to speak in their presence or even appear before them without first having obtained the royal favor. In the case of Servant, all is different. Even kings shall be converted by his unusual life and teaching. "What has been told them, shall they see." The world has always had its idealists, but seeing the reality of great ideals is another matter. Servant makes real in human action the dream of all the best before him.

The hope of the prophets has at last been fulfilled in Servant. He has become a part of world history. The message of the God of the prophets has been introduced to the world at large; he has found listeners and converts. This marks the beginning of the idea of the Kingdom of God. The religion of the Old Testament finds its glory here. Jesus, as a boy, learned in the Synagog school this great ideal, and as a man, proclaimed it to the whole world. Thus was Servant the great Forerunner.

What final victory does God promise Servant? In what respect is this glorification unusual?

What value to the world are ideals? Why is every disciple of Jesus' *Way of Life* called upon to be a *practical idealist?*

What is the origin of the idea of the Kingdom of God? How does Servant compare with John the Baptist as the Forerunner of Jesus? Where and how did Jesus learn of Servant?

Sixth Day: The Gentile Nations Proclaim Servant's Praise.

Who could have believed what we heard?
To whom has Yahweh's power been revealed?
He grew up before him like a tender plant,
Yes, like a root out of the desert.
He had neither form nor majesty
Nor could we desire his appearance
Because his visage was marred more than any man's
And his form more than the sons of men.
He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with sickness;
And like one from whom a man hides his face
He was forsaken; and we esteemed him not.
Surely our sickness has he borne,
And our sufferings has he carried.
As for us, we thought him smitten,
Stricken of God and afflicted.

But really he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised because of our iniquities.
Our peace was chastisement for him,
And with his stripes has come healing for us.
All we like sheep have gone astray.
Every man has turned to his own way;
Then Yahweh caused to light on him
The punishment of us all.
He was oppressed; then he humbled himself,
Nor was he in the habit of opening his mouth.
As a sheep led to the slaughter,
And as a ewe before her shearers is dumb,
So was he never in the habit of opening his mouth.[1]
From oppression and judgment was he removed,
But who will meditate his fate,
That he was cut off from the land of the living,
For the sin of the peoples was he smitten to death?
They buried him with the wicked,
Yes, among evil doers was his mound,
Nevertheless he had done no evil,
Nor was there any deceit in his mouth.
Yet it pleased Yahweh to crush him.
When he makes his soul an offering for sin,
He shall see seed; days shall increase
As Yahweh's purpose by him is accomplished,
From trouble will he deliver his soul,
He will let him see light. He shall be satisfied.[2]

—Isaiah 52:14; 53:1-11a.

After it is too late, the peoples understand. How like life! During Servant's life, it was so easy to mock him, make fun of him, disregard him, and shun him. But the faithful man persevered. He went among thankless people until he caught the leprosy, that awful scourge of all time. He died. Without ceremony they buried him among criminals, "nevertheless he had done no evil." *Too late* they began to think about him. Why had he given himself so unselfishly? Why had he never thought of saving himself? Why had he not defended himself against his false accusers? Such questions no one could answer. Hence arose the only answer which mankind has been able to formulate: Servant suffered because others sinned. He

[1] Servant never defended himself. Like Jesus he had no need to do so.
[2] I.e., after his death he shall live again.

suffered vicariously. And such is the way of this world. The innocent suffer more than the guilty and it must needs be so. How else could the guilty be brought to repentance? Jesus as a boy and man pondered long upon this. Doubtless when he tarried behind in Jerusalem at the age of twelve he asked the rabbis about this problem. He decided to live the vicarious life. He died for a sinful world. We love Him and long to be His worthy disciples because He did. This is the way of life. All who have drunk deeply at the springs of life must say, "Amen."

Why do most people come to their senses *too late?* Why could not the nations understand Servant?

Tell the story of Servant's life among the Gentiles. What caused his death? How was he buried? What hope of future life do you find in the poem?

What is vicarious suffering? Why do the innocent suffer more than those who have sinned?

Seventh Day: Yahweh Speaks the Final Vindication of Servant.

The righteousness of my servant shall be a justification for many.
As for their iniquity, he carries it.
Therefore will I reward him with the mighty ones,
As the powerful shall he inherit spoil,
Because he sacrificed his life,
And with transgressors was numbered.
He is the one who carried the sin of many
And for transgressors made intercession.

—Isaiah 53: 11b-12.

Servant's work has been accomplished. He has gone from the earth. The nations appreciated him too late and could only mourn their own blindness. Their lament receives a fitting answer from God himself who confirms all they say and declares that the unselfish suffering of Servant has made him their Savior. The first sentence of this day's reading sums up a law in the spiritual world: The righteousness of a good and pure soul works justification for many. The list of those purified by an unselfish and pure love would be a long one. We need think only of Jesus and Mary Magdalene and the thief on the cross.

The work yet goes on in the life of every true Disciple of Jesus who perfected the work begun so long ago by Servant.

Think of an instance in your own life where you have been helped by unselfish love.

Compare the lives of Servant and Jesus.

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

I

THE STORY OF SERVANT

In far away Palestine there was once born a little boy who, when he grew up, became dissatisfied with the way people about him thought and lived. He disliked their narrow-hearted and selfish attitude which made them think that God cared only for them and their little land, and had no love for the countless thousands out beyond the blue hills and the sandy desert. Most of all he rebelled against the universal belief of the time that soldiers and armies by brute strength can make a different world. The general idea in people's minds then was to get money or barter for every service rendered. The boy considered this wrong, and early resolved to live a life of earnest endeavor for neither gold nor possessions of any kind.

This boy was studious and in the Synagog school he learned to love the writings of a great poet now known as Isaiah 40-55. Like all Hebrew boys of his generation he learned by heart all of these poems and as he wandered over the hills he recited them aloud. Finally, he reached man's estate, left the Synagog school, and announced his *new way of life*. The inspiration for this new way of life he had found in part in Isaiah 40-55, but the greater part was original with him. What his name was we do not know, nor has his genealogy been preserved for us. All that we can learn of him is that he was called Servant.

Now Servant's *way of life* had six brand-new qualities about it: *First,* he resolved to go as a teacher to the nations then despised and regarded as having no part in the plan of a great, loving Father God. Servant was therefore the first *missionary.* He conceived of the religion of his God as an all-embracing *way of life* for all peoples of the earth. This *way of life* he called truth, *mishpat* (true religion), and light. In this belief, he was all alone. Nobody then believed that there was an impartial God who cared for people of all colors and languages.

It is not likely that he convinced any of his fellow-men during his lifetime, for we hear of no one else with the missionary zeal until the author of the book of Jonah about one hundred years later. But whether he convinced any of his people or not, he was sure that God had called him to this work. He had heard God breathing into his very heart that he was a chosen servant. This inbreathing of God we know as inspiration. Never could Servant be discouraged because he was assured of the eternal presence of God, who never forsakes even though suffering may temporarily blind the human eyes. Such a moment of blindness Servant describes, but the assurance comes quickly that both his justification and his activity are with his God. As Servant continued his work, he felt, as did Jeremiah, that he had been called even before his birth to do this work for God. This is an indication of true religion, and the man who has this passion for work has also the continued practice of the presence of God. Thousands since Servant's time have had the same assurance.

The *second* characteristic of Servant's purpose for life was the feeling that he must go beyond the seas to the people of the distant isles. Now no Hebrews had ever desired to go to the distant isles. They feared the sea and kept to their inland hills and valleys. The seafaring Phoenicians had cared for all the trading that had ever been done. Solomon had called upon them to help in building the temple, but his own people had never built a boat nor sailed upon the stormy Mediterranean. The Hebrews, further, believed that terrible monsters infested the seas. Behemoth, Leviathan, Rahab, and other sea creatures that sought the life of man filled their psalms and stories. Such a monster swallowed Jonah. Mothers told their children of these terrible monsters and not a person grew to manhood with the desire to go to sea. Tales, too, had been told in the marketplace by Phoenicians and Greeks of the travels and dangers of sailors. Palestine, like Greece and all the Mediterranean shore, had ever her quota of minstrels who sang of the sea. Servant means to dare all this. He will brave the deep to bring the true religion to his brothers who live in the distant isles. More than that, he hears those far-away places call for him. He can do nought but respond.

The *third* characteristic of Servant's *way of life* is his opposition to militarism which was the prevailing belief of his time. Even his method of teaching is opposed to that of the

old warlike *nabis*, Elijah and Elisha. No method could be more different than Servant's from Elijah's. Who can forget the savage attack and slaughter by the brook Kishon? Servant

> . . . shall not cry, nor even his voice lift up,
> No, not even in the street shall he cause
> his voice to be heard.
> A bruised reed he shall not break
> No, a smoking flax he shall not quench.

Elijah taught by fire and sword but Servant teaches like Socrates and Plato in the quiet of a few disciples. Jesus nowhere commended Elijah's sword but used the method of Servant. Further, Servant was the world's first non-resister. When he was persecuted he neither resisted nor defended himself. Jesus afterward went to his trial in silence, believing that the truth needs no defense. This method, of course, must finally be triumphant, but its way in the world is slow because men have been taught that might makes right. After nineteen hundred years Jesus' fulfilment of Servant's non-resistance, however, is gaining an ever increasing following. Experience, since 1914, has been gradually showing people that Jesus was right when He said: "For all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52). Not till the world comes to believe in the essential truthfulness of Jesus will wars cease; but that day is coming.

The *fourth* characteristic of the new *way of life* is Servant's belief in a continuous revelation from God.

> Morning by morning he wakens my ear.

This is by far one of the most beautiful conceptions in the Old Testament. A continuous revelation from an ever living God is an absolute necessity for a healthy religious life. So many people earnestly desire a living message from God, but feel that such messages were given only to the patriarchs and prophets long ago. The formation of a canon of Scripture has also added to this feeling. But the idea is false. God is a living God. He speaks today to men in America just as surely as he spoke to men in the ancient days in Palestine. The difference lies in the fact that people in this generation do not expect such great things of God as our ancestors did. Servant's ear awoke morning by morning because he expected to hear from God. Nor was he ever disappointed. Let us once and for all time

be rid of the idea that God spoke on ancient occasions only. We may be sure that He has just as much interest in the complicated life of modern times as He had in the simple nomadic life of a few shepherds or herdsmen long ago. Let us also be rid of the idea of God as an *absentee landlord*. He is in control of this world. He has not wound it like a clock and then gone off to let it run. His interest is in all His children. Read the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels with this in mind and they become at once new.

The *fifth* characteristic of Servant's *way of life* is that he endured all kinds of persecution, suffering, and sickness for others. He was the example for *unselfish helpfulness*. People cannot understand an unselfish act; they think only in commercial terms. How much does he get out of it? How much must I pay? It is the everlasting *how much* that blinds so many otherwise excellent people. Even after the world war a young man went to Germany and stopped for a time in a rural village. The people were in desperate need and he pitied the children especially. One day he invited all the village children to go with him for a picnic. No one in the village could understand why he would spend so much money when, as they saw it, he received nothing in return. Their faith in mankind was heightened when they understood that the pure joy of unselfish giving was a far greater recompense than anything else could ever be. Servant and Jesus both died happy. Remember especially those words of Jesus to his disciples just before he went to Calvary: "I have told you all this so that you may have the happiness I have had, and that your happiness may be complete" (John 15:11). There is no real happiness which comes from dollars, cents, and possessions; the complete happiness comes from a life unselfishly lived, even as Servant's and Jesus'.

In the *sixth* characteristic of Servant's *way of life* we find the origin of the conception known in the New Testament as the *Kingdom of God*. As we have seen, before his work nobody believed in a God who cared for everybody everywhere. Servant was thus the arch-radical of his time. No one could possibly have agreed with him because he opposed completely all the accepted ideas of the time. This is no easy thing to do. But Servant persisted and gradually a few people began to accept the new teaching. A missionary interest began which finally culminated in the spread of the *way of life* advocated by Jesus and which today is known as Christianity. With this

new impulse began the ideas of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which together make what we call the Kingdom of God.

In order to make these points known, Servant had to travel among the Gentiles where he was persecuted and at last fell a victim to that most dreaded of all diseases, leprosy. His face and body were so marred that no one cared to see him; he was as odd in body as in spirit, and as unusual as a plant in the desert. Finally, after his death his vindication came.

The dramatic effect in the Servant songs is remarkable and deserves a higher praise than has ever been given to it. Nothing in the dramas of the Greeks surpasses it, but the similarity is striking. The movement is rapid and lively. The speaker announces his subject as in the classical dramas, and the chorus of the nations sums up in a few well-chosen phrases the entire story. Brevity is always a virtue in anything written to endure and the author here stands supreme. It is to be hoped that some day Biblical literature may be so unraveled from the Bible that it may be enjoyed equally with Plato and Euripides.

II

THE INFLUENCE OF SERVANT IN THE LIFE OF JESUS

We know from the account in Luke 2:41 ff. that Jesus as a boy was extraordinarily studious. He attended the Synagog school with the other boys of the village and learned the sacred writings of his people in the original Hebrew. In his after life he quoted extensively from the prophets and occasionally from the law. The highest tribute of all, however, he paid to the poems describing the life of Servant. This perfect tribute lies in his reinterpreting the old *idea of Messiah* into Servant's *way of life*. This reinterpretation was necessary because the idea of Messiah in Jesus' time had so far departed from that of Isaiah that it had become in the popular imagination merely a great and powerful warrior who should free his people from foreign oppression and taxation. Jesus had no interest whatsoever in governmental affairs and bravely told his dissatisfied countrymen to pay their tribute to Caesar. The leaders of the nationalistic parties could neither understand him nor forgive him. To the last the greater part of his intimate group of

twelve expected him to head a political revolution. The episode of Palm Sunday shows the attitude of the common crowd who followed him so long as they thought he would relieve them of the disagreeableness of paying the Roman tax. The irony of history lies in the fact that Jesus was put to death for the very thing which during all his life he sought to avoid. The whole conflict lay in his effort to give the word *Messiah* a new meaning.

In spite of the apparent failure evidenced by the crucifixion, he had succeeded. It is true that his disciples, overcome by disappointment, gave up hope temporarily, saying, "We hoped that he was to be the deliverer of Israel" (Luke 24:21). But this loss of hope was only for the moment. Just as after Servant's death the nations understood him, so after Jesus' crucifixion his disciples understood him. At once they remembered his words and began to explain his life's mission in terms of Servant. Acts 8:26 ff. give us an excellent illustration of the early church's teaching of Jesus in terms of Servant's vicarious suffering, life, and death. Just as in Servant's case, so Jesus' death was necessary that his disciples might understand. Without this interpretation of the Messianic activity of Jesus, the new movement would at once have ceased to be. No nationalistic enterprise of the ordinary messianic character could possibly have survived. In fact, many messianic revolts both before Jesus' time and after were ruthlessly put down by Rome. Pilate's vain attempt to save Jesus from his infuriated countrymen was due to the fact that he really understood that Jesus was not a messianic revolutionist; and it must not be forgotten that *Messiah* to both the Romans and Jews of Jesus' time meant nothing more than a revolutionist plotting the overthrow of Roman power in Palestine.

Jesus clearly saw from the hour known as the *temptation* that he must give the word Messiah a new meaning. The idea was so ingrained into the thinking of his people that to root it up was impossible. Accordingly, he always forbade on Jewish soil those whom he healed to hail him as Messiah. On the road to Caesarea Philippi he warned Peter against making him known as the Messiah. The apostles stood aghast as he taught them that he *must suffer and die* as Servant had, which was exactly the opposite of anything that popular expectation associated with the triumph of the Messiah. For this reason Peter, Judas, and the rest never understood him until his

death. Jesus' death was necessary that his cause might prosper and succeed. Truly, like Servant, he suffered undeservedly and died as a non-resistant that future ages might understand.

This is the course of things in this world. The herald of the new age must bow his head and die that the coming generation may live. If Servant, Socrates, Jesus, and Paul had been faithless to their trust, if they had died as old men peacefully in their beds, the world would yet be wallowing in savagery. Never should we forget that

Our peace was chastisement for *them*.

III

ISAIAH, CHAPTERS 56-66

The remaining ten chapters of the literature now called the *Book of Isaiah* were written after the Servant Drama had been given to the world. Who wrote these last ten chapters we do not know; but internal evidence from the poems themselves shows that the author wrote them in Jerusalem after the return but before the walls of the city had been rebuilt by Nehemiah in 445. The author was surely a disciple of Servant although he never fully understood him, but from him he received both his inspiration and his call to a holy life of unselfish service. Of this he has left his own confession:

The spirit of the Lord, Yahweh, is on me,
Because Yahweh has anointed me,
To announce good news to the poor. He has sent me
To bind up those who are broken in heart,
To proclaim to captives their freedom,
And to prisoners a free release,
To proclaim Yahweh's year of grace,
And a day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who are mourning,[1]
To give them a garland in place of weeds,[2]

[1] A scribe has added to the poem—"To appoint for the mourners of Zion."

[2] This is a pun in Hebrew which I have tried to reproduce. The meaning is to give them a garland such as was worn at festivals of joy instead of ashes or other signs of mourning which were worn to show sadness.

The oil of gladness for the garment of mourning,
A song of praise for the spirit of heaviness.
And their names shall be oaks of righteousness,
A planting of Yahweh for His glory.

—Isaiah 61 : 1-3.

All this exhibits Servant's spirit and shows that he had disciples who believed in his *way of life* even if it was too far above the thinking of their time.

We must remember that eventful day in the little Galilean village of Nazareth when Jesus came back from the Jordan experience and had decided to carry on the work left unfinished by the beheaded John. He, too, nurtured in the spirit of Servant, "went into the Synagog according to his custom on the Sabbath, and he rose to read. Now there was given to him the book of the Prophet Isaiah, and when he had opened the book he sought out the place where it was written

The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
For he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and seeing to the blind,
To send to liberty the oppressed,
To proclaim a gracious year of the Lord."[1]

Here he stopped reading and gave the book back, for Jesus understood God and Servant. Jesus stopped short of the word "vengeance" but the author of Isaiah 56-66 is full of it. He *hates* his enemies; but Jesus taught his disciples to *love* their enemies. The author of the ten chapters is frankly militaristic and, like many people today, denounces a military machine only when it is run by the enemy. In chapter 63 in apocalyptic style he gives a terrible picture of God's slaughtering the Edmonites and coming home spattered with their blood. How utterly abhorrent this must have been to Jesus who healed and blessed the Edmonites (Idumeans, of Mark 3 : 8). But when the unknown author wrote this he was not at his best. No one has always and at all times been at his best except Jesus and *he must be our pattern and ideal.*

[1] Note a few differences between the Hebrew and New Testament wording in Luke 4: 17 ff. The author of Luke copied from a Greek translation of the Bible or quoted from memory, but Jesus read the Hebrew as was always done in the Synagog.

TOPICS FOR STUDY

Tell the story of Servant's life in your own words. How do parts of his life describe that of Jesus? Is there any resemblance in Lincoln's life to that of Servant?

How did Jesus become familiar with the story of Servant? What was a school like in Nazareth village in Jesus' boyhood? What evidences do we have that Jesus was a studious boy?

What was the meaning of the word Messiah in Jesus' day to (a) Romans, (b) Jews, (c) Jesus' disciples? What new meaning did Jesus put into the word Messiah? What is the real significance of Jesus' temptation?

Why were both Servant and Jesus understood and appreciated only after their death? Was this true of Socrates and Lincoln? Why is it necessary that some men should die for others?

How did the early disciples explain Jesus' Messiahship? (Acts 8:26 ff.) Why did they not explain Jesus as the Messiah of Psalm 2?

Read the following passages from Isaiah 56-66 to see the influence of the prophets who had gone before: 55:6-13,-56:7; 61:1-3, 4, 8; 64:1, 8; 65:17-25; 66:1, 18-19. Which prophets do these passages imitate?

What use did Jesus make of Isaiah 61:1 ff.? Wherein did the author of Isaiah 56-66 fail to understand Servant?

Review Chapters 6 and 7 and try to fix in your mind a connected story of all the Isaian Literature. Over how many years does this literature extend?

Chapter XIV

Prophets of the Persian and Greek Period

The Persian supremacy over Palestine extended from 538 till 333. In the latter year Alexander the Great defeated the Persians at Issus and soon after gained complete possession of Palestine. The Greeks ruled till 166 B.C., when a period of Jewish independence under the Maccabees came which lasted till 63 B.C., when the Romans added Palestine as a province. It was during the Roman rule that Jesus lived and died. In this chapter we shall concern ourselves with the canonical prophets of the Persian and Greek periods. We have already studied two prophets of the Persian period, viz., Deutero-Isaiah and his pupil, the author of the Servant Songs. These two were the greatest of the whole period from Isaiah and Jeremiah to the close of the Biblical material. Prophecy from this time on began to take more and more the nature of the apocalypse and so lost its power. The remaining prophets of the Persian and Greek periods are:

Haggai, 520; Zechariah (chapters 1-8), 520-518; Isaiah (chapters 56-66), 500-445; Obadiah, 470; Malachi, 460; Joel, 400; Zechariah (chapters 9-14), after 333; Jonah, between 400 and 200 B.C.

First Day: Haggai, the Prophet of the New Temple.

On the first day of September, 520 B.C.,[1] Yahweh's word came through Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, Shealtiel's son, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, Jehozadak's son, the high priest, as follows: This people keep saying that the time has not yet come for the rebuilding of Yahweh's house.

[1] Hebrew way of dating is "in the second year of Darius" or 520, "in the sixth month" or end of August and beginning of September, "on the first day of the month" or as near as we can date, September first.

Yahweh's answer through Haggai the prophet was as follows: Can it be possible that this is the time for you yourselves to live in your ceiled houses while the temple is a ruin? . . . Pay heed to what you are doing. You sow much but reap little; you eat but you are not satisfied; you drink but are not filled; you put on clothing but are not warm; you earn good wages but for a leaky purse. . . . Why is this? Yahweh Sabaoth said, Because my house is a ruin while you are all concerned with your own houses.—Haggai 1:1-6, 9b.

Haggai attacks the selfishness of the returned exiles who claim to be religious, and yet pay all their attention and money to their own comfort and allow the temple to lie in ruins. But consider the situation. The weary people had just returned home from Babylonia. They had endured a poverty-stricken career, and now desired homes of their own. Each man built his own house, cultivated his field, and earned money for his family. Evidently the prophet considered that they built luxurious houses because he accuses them of *ceiling* them. This means that they had a roof over their heads while Yahweh's dwelling was a mere heap of stones. He paints the condition of life vividly. The same thing may be seen in any refugee camp in the East today. The pitiful attempt at a harvest, half enough to eat and drink, and insufficient clothing, all go with the exiles' camp. One is reminded of the wanderer's plight pictured in Goethe's "Hermann und Dorothea." The story is ever the same. They try to earn wages but prices are too high.

Haggai's conception of God is interesting as an example of pre-Christian thinking. Yahweh is jealous that his house has not been built while those of his worshipers have been. He accordingly punishes the people with poor harvests, scanty food, drink, and clothing. This way of thinking went with the idea of a localized God, one who dwelt in the temple, one who showed his favor by having particular attention paid to him. Jesus corrected this way of thinking. He said God is love and is spiritual; he cannot be localized. He demands not a beautiful temple, but he does demand obedience to his *Way of Life.*

What is the story of the exiles' return and their attempt to build houses for themselves?

Why is Haggai so indignant with the people?

What is his conception of what God is and demands? Compare this with Jesus' teaching.

Second Day: Zechariah (1-8), Contemporary of Haggai.

THE WOMAN IN THE EPHAH

Now the angel who was talking to me went out and said to me, Lift up your eyes to see what this is that is going out? Then I said, What is it? And he answered, This is an ephah that is going away . . . and behold a cover of lead was being raised and a woman was sitting inside the ephah. Then said he, This is Miss Wickedness, and he threw her down into the ephah and he replaced the lead cover over the top. Then I looked up and saw two women coming out with wind in their wings, and behold! their wings were like the wings of storks, and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven. Then I said to the angel who was talking to me, Where are they taking the ephah? And he answered, To build her a house in the land of Shinar (Babylonia) and when it is completed she will be put there in her own place. —Zechariah 5: 5-11.

This shows us the form of vision in the later prophets. The book of Zechariah (chapters 1-8 of the canonical book) abound in visions which are half prophetic and half apocalyptic, i.e., these visions have the characteristics of Amos' realistic pictures and of Ezekiel's forms, which are impossible to visualize.

The vision tells a pretty story. Zechariah, a contemporary of Haggai, desired like him to have a new, restored, and renovated Jerusalem and Judaism. To this end all evil must be banished. Now the ancient Semites all thought of evil as a feminine product. The belief that Eve in the garden led Adam astray was shared by Babylonians and Palestinians alike. Naturally, the Hebrew prophet could think of no more fitting place for her final abode than the land which had caused his fatherland so much suffering. She is packed up in an ephah, a measuring basket or can, probably resembling a milk can, a lead cover is put over her and then she is dispatched to Babylonia. (Shinar is an older name for Babylonia.) Thus Palestine in the future will be freed from evil!

The other point of interest is the effort to localize evil and put it in a home of its own. Folk religion has a residence for evil (devil) in a region, hell. This idea has had an interesting development which can be traced step by step. So *Hades, Gehenna,* and *Sheol* came in the aftertime to denote in the folk

religions the abodes of sin. Originally they had no such connotation. With such a belief, of course, evil is not thought of as being absolutely destroyed. Paul had thought the subject out more carefully and in I Corinthians 15 he says that death will finally also be "swallowed up."

What is the story of Palestine's freedom from evil? Why does Zechariah picture wickedness as a woman? What was the origin of this idea? What remnants of this belief exist today? Why has the emancipation of women been so difficult?

Why did ancient people think of everything as having a home? Why should the Hebrews think Babylonia the proper home for wickedness? What remnants of this belief do you know today?

Third Day: Obadiah, Prophet of Edom's Destruction.

A vision of Obadiah.
Thus said Lord Yahweh concerning Edom:
We have heard a message from Yahweh,
While a messenger has been to the nations,
Arise, let us prepare war against her.
Behold, little will I make you among the nations.
Ah, you are greatly despised,
The pride of your heart has deceived you.
O you who dwell in the clefts of Petra,
Making high your abode;
You who say in your heart,
Who can cast me to the earth?
Ah, if you mount up like an eagle,
If you set your nest among the stars,
From thence will I bring you down.

—Obadiah 1:1-4.

Way back in Genesis 25:19-34 we read an old, old story. It tells of the hatred two brothers—twin brothers—had for each other. Now hatred always has been bitter, but the hatred of Cain for Abel was worse than the hatred of Saul for David. When blood hates its own blood that hate can result in only one thing,—murder. Here is the ancient story of Jacob (Is-

[1] Hebrew has Selah, literally Rock, which is the name of the ruin of the ancient capital to this day. Petra means rock.

rael) and Esau (Edom); and they were twin brothers—a hatred more bitter than that of Cain for Abel.

All down through history this hatred grew and never for one moment lessened. Edom and Israel never swore a truce nor met at Versailles. They kept fighting to the last. Israel firmly believed that Yahweh hated Edom just as every hundred per-cent Israelite did. Vulgar patriotism demands hatred for other nations; it always has and always will. Unfortunately, we have no record of Edom's that gives his side of the story, but we may be sure that like the Mesa Stone of Moab it would hold the belief that Edom's God hated Israel just as the Edomites did.

The prophecy of Obadiah pictures for us the attitude of Israel for its ancient foe. It is a hymn of hate. It is beautiful as poetry; but what does it sound like compared with Jesus' teaching? Israel and Edom have their counterparts today in France and Germany, and, if we believe the newspapers, the descendants of the twins are increasing.

Read the story of the birth of the nations Israel (Jacob) and Edom (Esau) in Genesis. Do you think the causes of modern hatreds have been any more sensible than the ancient ones? How do you think vulgar patriotism can be made to conform to Jesus' *Way of Life?*

Fourth Day: Malachi, Believer in the Final Triumph of Righteousness.

Your words insult me, says Yahweh, and yet you say, What are we saying against you? Why, you are saying, Serving God is useless; and what do we get out of keeping his precepts? Or what do we get out of going in mourning before Yahweh Sabaoth? Why, we are the ones who must congratulate the wicked. The evil doers prosper, too. They also have tempted God and escaped.

This is the way fearers of Yahweh have talked with each other, and Yahweh listened and heard it. So he caused a book of remembrances to be written before Him for the benefit of those who reverence Yahweh and honor His name. They shall be mine, said Yahweh Sabaoth, on the day when I reckon my possessions. And I will spare them as a father spares an obedient son. Then you shall repent and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not. For behold a day is coming that consumes like a furnace,

and all the insolent and workers of iniquity shall be chaff, and the coming day shall burn them, said Yahweh Sabaoth, so that neither root nor branch of them shall remain. But on that day, for you who honor my name, there shall rise the sun of righteousness with healing in its wings and you shall go out and rejoice like calves of the stall; but the wicked shall you tread down; as dust shall they be under the soles of your feet on that day I am making, said Yahweh Sabaoth.—Malachi 3: 13-21 (Heb.).

The little book called *Malachi* demands again the strict moral living about which we hear in the older prophets. Who the author was, or where he lived, we do not know. *Malachi* is the Hebrew word for "my messenger" and whoever the author may have been he deserves this most noble title. The book contains a message for the people who had begun again to grow indifferent. Haggai's and Zechariah's teaching had borne fruit. The temple had been dedicated fifty-six years before Malachi wrote. The old stress and storm had passed; life flowed on in its usual way. The Persian government was lenient and according to the prophet received more honor from Yahweh's people than Yahweh himself did (1:8). There were no more hungry and thirsty exiles; but as plenty abounded, the people grew indifferent. They brought blemished cattle as offerings, thinking that Yahweh would not notice the difference; they divorced their wives contrary to the Jewish custom; and they openly declared that serving God seemed to bring no reward. The prophet combats this false idea which common, everyday experience seems to teach people in every generation. He says that although a dishonest man may seem to be rich, he is really poor, and even though a liar may escape justice, he is, nevertheless, a criminal.

The prophet then tells of the doubts the religious often have whether God notices their piety. He records an interesting conversation which went on between the members of what later developed into what we call churches and synagogs. But—nothing ever escapes God's attention. The insight of the prophet shines again in the Oratorio "Elijah":

> But the Lord is mindful of His own
> He remembers His children.

Have you ever felt as though unreligious and evil-intentioned people seemed to flourish better than the conscientious one who always tries to do right? What was the conversation of the

little religious community which Malachi records? How may we be sure that God "is ever mindful of His own"? Wherein does the real difference lie between a religious and a non-religious person?

Read the First Psalm and see how many parallel thoughts to Malachi you find in it.

Fifth Day: Joel, the Prophet Who Describes a Locust Plague in Judah.

The prophet Joel tells of a locust plague in Jerusalem and Judah of such terribleness that throughout all time it can never be forgotten. Despair, however, should not blind people to a good God.

O aged ones, listen to this,
Lend an ear, all dwellers in the land.
Has it happened thus in your days,
Or in the days of your fathers?
Concerning this tell your children,
And your children tell it to theirs.
The residue left by the shearer[1]
Has been eaten by the swarmer,
And the residue left by the swarmer
Has been eaten by the lapper,
And the residue left by the lapper
Has been eaten by the finisher.
There stands a ruined vineyard,
And fig trees torn to pieces;
Every shred of foliage gone,
White gleam the bare branches.
The farmer is utterly ruined,
The vinegrowers lament in despair;
As for the wheat and the barley
Lost is the harvest of the land.

And now comes Yahweh's word:
Turn to me with all your mind,
Come with feasting, weeping, lamenting,
Rend your heart and not your garment.

[1] "Shearer, swarmer, lapper, and finisher" is an attempt to express in English synonyms for *locusts*. The Hebrew language has an abundance of such synonyms which the English language, of course, does not have because English-speaking people have never been cursed with these pests. See marginal note in the English Version.

And it shall come to pass after that,
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions,
Even on the men and maid servants,
In those days shall I pour out my spirit.

—Joel 1:2-4, 7, 11; 2:28 E.V. (3: Heb.).

Joel was a dramatic poet. In the above poem, he calls all classes of people to hear him exactly in the style of Vergil and Homer. The whole poem should be read in order to catch the prophet's pictures and similes, some of which are like those in Homer.

Locust plagues visit Palestine with most destructive effect. Their deadly work can scarcely be exaggerated. They mean famine and death to the people of the country. In the face of such a calamity, the prophet calls upon the people to remember that there is a good God, who, if the people will turn to him in sincerity, will be more to them than vineyards and plowed fields. Like Jeremiah he calls on his countrymen to rend their hearts and not their garments. Real sincerity and not outward show is what God demands. He believed, too, in a better day when all should reverence God and obey him. When these precepts were followed, the condition would be fulfilled and the Holy Spirit would descend on all the children of God.

Read an article on locusts and try to visualize Joel's poem.

Do people readily turn to God in time of discouragement? Why? What is the origin of the idea expressed by "rending heart and not garment"?

Sixth Day: Zechariah (9-14), The Ideal King of the Messianic Age.

Rejoice greatly, O Zion,
Shout, O Jerusalem,
Behold, your king comes to you.
Righteous and victorious shall he be,
Humble and riding an ass,
Yes, on the colt of a she-ass.
He shall cut off the wagon from Ephraim,
And the horse from Jerusalem,

And he shall destroy the war bow,
And peace proclaim to the peoples.
And he shall rule from sea to sea,
And from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.
—Zechariah 9: 9-10.

The first eight verses of this chapter tell how the promised land shall in a future day become the possession of Israel. True, in the past, part of the land had been ruled by the descendants of the Patriarchs. David had conquered the coveted city of Jerusalem and Solomon had extended the kingdom to its greatest extent; but all the land from the north to the south and from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean had never been a Hebrew possession. The hope nevertheless lived on that someday the Jew would rule the world under the Messianic king.

Jerusalem is to receive the king who is to be of the character pictured by Isaiah and Micah retouched by Servant. Compare this view of the king with that in Psalm Two. The king here is a peacemaker who shall destroy even the implements of war; the king of Psalm Two is a militarist. The picture of Palm Sunday is taken from Zechariah because Jesus came to teach peace and to destroy war among the nations. What a blasphemy it is to apply Psalm Two to Jesus! Yet even during the last war such a sacrilegious application was made. If Jesus is to be the king of the world he must be one who is to bring peace impartially to all peoples. This is what he tried to teach, but neither the Pharisees of his day nor this day will understand him.

In what way has the author of Zechariah 9-14 pictured the Messianic king? Compare his picture with Isaiah's. Are they just alike?

What is your idea of Jesus' so-called Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem? Why did he ride on a donkey rather than on a horse?

Why cannot Psalm Two be applied to Jesus? To whom in history can it be applied?

Seventh Day: Jonah, the Hebrew Missionary to Nineveh.

And the word of Yahweh came to Jonah, Amittai's son, as follows:
Rise, go to the great city of Nineveh and preach to it;

for its wickedness has come to my notice. But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish (a Spanish seaport) away from Yahweh. . . . Then Yahweh caused a strong gale to blow and a great tempest arose in the sea and the ship threatened to break to pieces, whereupon, the sailors fell into a panic and each one called out to his own god. . . . Then they said to one another, Come, let's cast lots to find out who is the cause of this evil. So they cast lots and it fell to Jonah. . . . Then he said to them, Lift me up and throw me into the sea so that it may become calm for you, because I know that it is my fault that this great tempest has come upon you. . . . So they took Jonah up and threw him into the sea and immediately it grew calm. . . . Then Yahweh commanded a great fish to swallow Jonah; and Jonah was inside the fish three days and three nights. . . . Then Yahweh spoke with the fish and it threw Jonah to the shore. . . . Then Jonah rose and went to Nineveh according to Yahweh's word. . . . And the citizens of Nineveh believed in God. And God saw their behavior that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which He had promised to do to them and he didn't do it. . . . Then Jonah flew into a great rage and became very angry. . . . And Yahweh said to him, Is it right for you to be as angry as this?—Jonah 1: 1-3a, 4-5a, 7, 12, 15; 2: 1, 11; 3: 3a, 5a, 10; 4: 1, 4.

About 250 years after Servant's death some unknown man (or woman) caught the spirit of his teaching and wrote the first missionary tract known to history. For that is just what Jonah is; it is a missionary tract for the times. By this time the law and the priests had silenced the prophets; apocalyptists had taken their places with words of comfort for a people living under foreign rulers. They looked for a glorious future when it should please their God to intervene in their behalf, set them above the other powers, and make the Gentiles pay tribute to them. They forgot that the prophets proclaimed a universal God and clung desperately to Yahweh, never ceasing to pray that He would suddenly come down from heaven to fight for them. But like all apocalyptists they met only disappointment. Of course, a people filled with such ideas can have little time to think of other people; so Servant's teaching was forgotten. Jonah represents a typical Jew of his age. He has not one bit of sympathy with a God like Servant's; but he found that Servant's God controls nature and obedience cannot be escaped. The second lesson—and a hard one too—was that God loved Assyri-

ans whom every loyal Jew hated. Jonah—human, unconverted, narrow-minded, conservative Jonah! But the tragedy is that he has thousands of like-minded brothers even two thousand years after the coming of Jesus.

What is the purpose of the Book of Jonah? Why did he have so much trouble? The author of the book was a disciple of what great prophet?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

I

HAGGAI, PROPHET OF THE NEW TEMPLE

We have already learned that Cyrus conquered Babylonia in 538 and issued an edict permitting all exiles to return home. Among these victims of war were the Jews. But to return was no easy matter. We have studied the exultant hope of Deutero-Isaiah who saw by faith the road through the desert and the return. After eighteen years we have a picture of the refugee camp in Jerusalem. Many have died on the way, others have stayed in Babylonia, but some have come all the way. Among them is an old man who feels outraged that Yahweh's house has been neglected while every person sees to it that he has a roof over his head.

The four oracles of Haggai's book give us the only record that we have of this interval of eighteen years. In connection with Haggai, Ezra and Nehemiah should be read, because they follow up Haggai's endeavor to have the temple rebuilt and tell all the attendant difficulties. It is interesting to know that Haggai's oracles are all in prose and exactly dated. In both these respects they resemble the greater part of Ezekiel's. His four oracles are all addressed either to Zerubbabel or the priests.

In Haggai we miss the beautiful spiritual teaching of Deutero-Isaiah and Servant. Wood and stone seem to fill Haggai's interest. God demands a house built by a carpenter rather than "a temple not made by hands." This change marks all the rest of the post-exilic prophecy. The sense of sin, the yearning for righteousness, the desire for communion with God, fade out in the terrific economic struggle. Judah never again was a free state. The people vacillated between the hope for a successful revolution and the struggle to secure money to pay taxes.

Finally, the struggle seemed hopeless for human hands and heads, and the desire for God's direct intervention grew in the minds of the people. This desire slowly passed into the apocalyptic type of literature. The economic pressure on a people always has a direct relation to the nature of its religion. We only have to think of the chaotic flights of the imagination during the World War to see the situation in Israel nearly 2500 years ago repeated in our own day and age.

II

ZECHARIAH, CONTEMPORARY OF HAGGAI

The old man, Haggai, died before the temple was built. His four oracles are all dated within four months. We hear nothing more from him; he probably died of a broken heart. Zechariah took up the work laid down by his old friend. He quoted the prophets who wrote before him and tried to hold people to the moral law. In this he surpassed Haggai who always thought in terms of material things. Most of his words, however, he expressed in visions.

These visions approach the apocalyptic form already found in Ezekiel's queer visions. These apocalyptic visions deal with forms and images which no pencil can sketch; their fantasy is beyond this world. He has left us eight visions dated February, 519 B.C. We have already studied the most interesting one. For all these visions he has an angel as guide, as Dante had Vergil. It may be well briefly to sketch these visions. (1) The scene is a myrtle grove near Jerusalem where the prophet sees the four horsemen (afterward the four horsemen of the Apocalypse), with Yahweh as the director. The horsemen act as do our state police and report to Yahweh. (2) The second vision shows the enemies of Judah (four horns), which are destroyed by four blacksmiths sent from Yahweh. (3) The third vision shows the New Jerusalem so secure that she has abandoned her wall. This shows remarkable faith. (4) The fourth vision represents the leaders of the new city in their power. (5) The fifth vision likewise represents the power of Yahweh in the new temple. (6) The sixth vision is a fine one. All the curses which the prophet knows are written in a scroll and sent flying through the air to roost on the homes of all wicked persons. (7) The seventh, Miss Wickedness, we have

studied on the second day of this week. (8) The eighth again goes to the final consummation of the political greatness of Judah when Zerubbabel as Messiah shall rule with Joshua, the priest.

Chapters 9-14 have nothing to do with Zechariah. They were added to his scroll by a late editor or reader just as the poems of Deutero-Isaiah were added to those of Isaiah of Jerusalem. It is well that these were dated. Chapters 9-14 are dated almost twenty years after Zechariah finished his book.

III

OBADIAH, PROPHET OF EDOM'S DESTRUCTION

The prophecy of Obadiah forms the shortest book in the canon of Scripture. It deals with the ancient Jacob-Esau (Israel-Edom) feud which characterized the life of primitive nomad tribes as it does today the life of the Arabs. It is ever the same story: Ishmael's (Arab's) hand against Isaac's (Jew's), Jacob's (Israel's) against Esau's (Edom's). The creed of patriotism, loyalty to one's clan, kept alive the spark which ever and anon flamed into war.

The story of Edom is one of the most romantic in all the Bible. As we have seen, the patriarchal accounts in Genesis speak of tribes as men. This is a type of personification that we must hold in mind to understand Genesis and often the prophets. Edom (Esau) was thus a grandson of Abraham as was Israel (Jacob). Edom, the hunter, moved south early in his career and occupied the rugged region of Mount Seir. For more than a thousand years they ruled supreme over the region made up so largely of red cliffs. When Israel marched up to the Promised Land, Edom proved to be the old foe and this was never forgiven; but, the worst sin of all in Israel's eyes was the treatment accorded him when Babylon captured Jerusalem in 586. Edom joined the enemy. Soon after, they moved north. Later the region was known as Idumea. In the Gospels Idumeans are mentioned as foreigners who came to hear Jesus.

Travelers today in Palestine deem themselves fortunate if they can arrange a visit to Petra, a city hewn entirely out of red rock, the ancient capitol of Edom. The old "rose red city, half as old as time," defies description. Neither the majesty of Egypt nor the glory of Baalbek and Palmyra can surpass

Petra's pure grandeur. Here, in this one-time city magnificent, dwelt the power of Edom "in the clefts of the rocks." Around it tower rugged, mighty peaks, all of which is overshadowed by Jebel Haroun (Mount Hor), where according to the identification with Numbers 20:22 Aaron died. Today this legendary grave of Aaron is the Muslim sanctuary of peculiar holiness to the devout. The belief that great prosperity comes to the pilgrim who visits this sacred grave makes it exceedingly difficult for non-Muslim to visit it. In fact, the Muslim are forbidden even for the ever sought *baksheesh* to conduct any other than the faithful there. If enough gold, however, is offered, the religious scruple is temporarily forgotten.

When the Edomites were driven north by the Nabateans, an Arab tribe, Petra flourished as a great commercial center. A paved road found a circuitous route through the mountain fastnesses and here Egypt mingled with Mesopotamia. Later the city fell into the hands of the Romans who embellished the already beautiful rock-hewn temples and tombs. A temple to Isis was hewn out of the solid rock at the entrance to the long narrow gorge now known as Wadi Musa (Valley of Moses), at the entrance to the city. To see this temple alone is worth all the exertion expended in the arduous trip to the land of Edom.

Petra was for more than one thousand years a forgotten ruin; but she can never be forgotten again. Since the war tourists have begun to explore its wonders. It is yet impossible to visit without an escort of soldiers. The party with which I visited the city in the spring of 1923, had eighty soldiers of his Majesty the Emir of Transjordania as protectors. Books are now being written and the next few years will add vastly to our knowledge both of Jacob and his twin brother. The Bible becomes a living book as in no other way when one climbs into the "clefts in the rock" where Edom built its nests as high as the eagle. The prophecy of Obadiah has been fulfilled. Proud Petra bowed her head into the dust; her vast amphitheatre emptied itself of its throngs, her temples became homes for bats and beasts of the earth. But, the twin brother's curse alighted alike on his own city; Jerusalem passed from Jacob. The holy city became a heap of ashes and broken stone only to be rebuilt as the home of another people. Truly God is impartial to all his children!

IV

MALACHI, BELIEVER IN THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Malachi in his time proved to be really a belated believer in righteous living. His little book with its concrete pictures of cheating, fraud, and dishonesty sounds too modern to have been written nearly twenty-four hundred years ago. Let us look at one or two of his pictures.

Here comes a Jew bringing a sheep to the temple to pay his church due. Malachi observes carefully and sees that the sheep has been blinded in one eye and walks a trifle lame. It would not bring full price in the market but its owner thinks that God will not notice the defects. He can't be as keen as a buyer! Of course the law demanded an unblemished offering for the temple, but the priests, not too scrupulous themselves, winked at the law. The old prophet shakes his head and goes away to think about the condition of his people.

Another day he went into the market-place and heard two leaders in the congregation talking like this: "What good does it do to pay our temple dues? What do we get out of it? If we put the money into sheep we increase our flock, if we sell the sheep we can have more camels for the caravan; but what reward can we see from the temple service? Don't those who disregard the whole thing get along as well? Look at the caravans and wealth of brother Jacob, he never pays a tithe nor does he help the Law. Really, the joke is on us." Again the old prophet went away sad. Long hours at home he poured over the Law and then he wrote that wonderful passage in this week's fourth day's study. Long afterward another religious man understood Malachi and almost using his very words wrote the First Psalm.

The prophet refers to an interesting belief which began to grow up when the Jews became scattered through the earth, viz., that there is ever before God a permanent book in which is recorded the deeds of persons good and bad. This record will preclude the possibility of his forgetting to reward the righteous at the proper time, which in Malachi is on a certain future day, which, coming suddenly, will destroy the wicked as completely as fire destroys chaff. The belief that the nation's God had records prevailed among all peoples in ancient times

because they thought of God as an oriental monarch who had lists before him. The Old Testament is full of this idea.

The picture of the reward of the righteous is one of the most beautiful we have in all prophecy. Righteousness in itself means victory. The righteous man has conquered. On him shall rise the sun with healing in its wings. We feel that sun *beams* are meant, but that is not so. Take down a book of pictures from Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria or Persia (and we do not study pictures enough) and you will see the sun's wings. What a beautiful conception! The sun flings out its wings over the earth and under its protection healing and justice come to all. Jesus in the Gospels referred to the impartiality of the sun.

V.

JOEL, THE PROPHET WHO DESCRIBED THE LOCUST PLAGUE IN JUDAH

Joel's book is the libretto of the Palestinian Oberammergau. When the little Bavarian village fell in the anguish of a plague and found refuge in God, it followed the way of Judah, twenty-three hundred years before. The prophet wrote his poem for the same reason that a text of the Passion Play was written—that it might be used by successive generations. Joel recited his poems as he went from village to village in the manner of Hellenic Homer.

Try to picture the poet-prophet as he sits in the center of the villagers at the market-place reciting, perhaps singing to the accompaniment of the harp (cf. Isaiah 5:1), the story of the terrible locust plague. The theme hit home to the hearts of his hearers. Not one of them had escaped the devastation wrought by the locust, whose quick, deadly work soon leaves a devastated land from whence the nomad tribes must wander with their flocks, and the villagers seek a livelihood as best they may. The poet uses the episode to teach one of the fundamental lessons of the Bible, viz., trust God with a clean heart, for he alone is sufficient.

A further lesson which the poet drew dealt with the *day of Yahweh*. This idea, dealt with by Amos three hundred fifty years before, has now the old terror about it. Bad as the locusts are, Yahweh's wrath on the nations will be far more terrible.

And I will gather all nations,
And bring them to the Valley of Jehoshaphat
And I will enter into judgment with them there.

Tradition has it that the valley of the brook Kidron is the one meant; and this is doubtless the one Joel had in mind for the final judgment. The Arabs as well as the Jews and Christians hold this tradition, maintaining that Jesus will on the final day pass judgment there.

Joel's book presents us also the development through which prophecy passed on the way to the apocalypse, or teaching about direct intervention by God in human affairs. through a cataclysmic upheaval. The Book of Daniel (written about 165 B.C.) shows the fully developed form which we find again in the New Testament "Apocalypse of John."

VI

ZECHARIAH (9-14), THE APOCALYPSE OF THE RESTORATION

Chapters 9-14 of the book of Zechariah were written about two hundred years after Zechariah's death. These chapters contain interesting prophetic poems and apocalypses and in the latter give us a good illustration of the type of literature which followed the prophets. The apocalypse forms a part of the large mass of literature which grew up between the Old and New Testaments, and has a prominent part in the New Testament itself. By this time in our study, we should be able to distinguish between *prophecy* and *apocalypse*. We may compare them thus:

Prophecy	Apocalypse
1. Deals primarily with the present.	Deals with the future.
2. Deals with individuals and definite nations.	Deals with all nations, peoples, etc. Has an intimate knowledge of what goes on in heaven.
3. Announces definite punishment for sin.	Unlimited cruelty, bloodshed, agony, and pain.
4. Only way for fellowship with God is the *way of absolute moral uprightness.*	Thinks in terms of reward and punishment rather than fellowship.

5. God works through people, His prophets, servants, etc.	Direct intervention by God Himself.
6. A gradual growth in righteous living, the coming kingdom of God on this earth.	A final cataclysm, a last day, this world comes to an end and passes away, a "New Jerusalem" descends from heaven.
7. Concrete pictures and illustrations from everyday life.	Vague, visionary, transcendental imagery which the pencil cannot draw nor the ordinary mind visualize.
8. Hope and faith in the ultimate triumph of human beings.	Hopeless pessimism. Man helpless to untangle the tangle of this world.
9. Literary prophets signed their names to their writings.	Authorship unknown or a pseudonym used.
10. Messianic prosperity on earth.	Heavenly bliss.
11. Unfulfilled prophecy.	Reinterpreted unfulfilled prophecy. Ex. Daniel (165 B.C.) 9:25-27, I Enoch (*c.* 165 B.C.) 83-90 deal with same bit of unfulfilled prophecy from Jeremiah.
12. First spoken or sung and later written when prophets were refused opportunity to speak. Written mostly in verse.	Written at first and mostly in prose.
13. Opposed to cult, legalism, and priestly rites.	Everything acceptable to the Law.

We may conveniently divide Zechariah 9-14 as follows:

9:1-17 the restoration of the Jews; 10:1-11:17 and 13:7-9 the allegory of the shepherds; 12:1-13:6 and 14 the future of the restored kingdom. The latter is entirely prose and apocalyptic.

Who the author of the section was has always been a problem. The author of the Gospel of Matthew considered that

Jeremiah wrote it and so quotes a passage in chapter 27:9. This indicates that even in the ancient days the section was anonymous. Matthew's Gospel was put in its final form about 70 A.D., and shows the opinion at that time. The Old Testament editor who joined it to the book of Zechariah considered Zechariah the author; and the Old Testament canon and Matthew's Gospel were put into their final form within thirty years of each other. Since such authorities differed it is useless for us to speculate as to the author's identity.

This apocalypse has been known chiefly because of the representation of the lowly Messiah; and, having furnished the background of Jesus' Palm Sunday entrance into Jerusalem, has been popularized by artists. The passage (see study for sixth day) has been quoted in Matthew 21:5 as follows:

> Tell Zion:[1]
> See, your king comes to you,
> Gentle and riding on an ass,
> Yes,[2] upon the foal of beast of burden.

Thus we see the importance of knowing this anonymous apocalypse, *first,* as an example of the way in which prophecy became apocalypse. Without a knowledge of this, many parts of the New Testament have no clear meaning. Again, certain phases of current beliefs today are merely remnants of this old way of thinking. *Second,* this booklet played an important part in the New Testament account of the life of Jesus.

VII

JONAH, THE HEBREW MISSIONARY TO ASSYRIA

The book called Jonah is the first bit of missionary propaganda ever written and the most successful. It is a charming satire on the average Jew who lived 200 years before Jesus' time. Who the author was we have no idea. He wrote about

[1] The Hebrew idiom *daughter* before the name of a city should be translated into English by the name of the city only. It is the Hebrew way of treating the city as feminine.

[2] English Version translates "and upon," etc., which is an error due to misunderstanding that the Hebrew word for *and* is used to introduce an explanatory phrase as here. The foal or colt explains that the ass upon which Jesus (in Hebrew the Messianic king) rode was a colt. This passage has often been quoted as "a mistake in the Bible"; but it is really a mistake in the translation. The original does not say that the Messiah rode on two animals as the English Version does!

a man named Jonah, and probably had in mind the one mentioned in II Kings 14:25. We must remember that it is *about* Jonah not *by Jonah.*

This story, in some ways, is the finest example of literature in the whole Old Testament. It ranks next to Jesus' parables as the best-told story in the whole Bible. What a pity that some irreverent persons made a joke of Jonah! Of course, this all came about in a perfectly natural way. Some people never paid any attention to the varieties of literature in the Bible and so failed to see that the story is a parable, an explanation of Servant's teaching. If they had only turned to the New Testament they would have found that Jesus taught principles and then illustrated them by parables. That is just what the author is doing. The person who first identified the fish with what we call the whale sinned not only against the author but also against common sense.

Jesus used the parable of Jonah as an illustration in his teaching because the story was so well known. In Luke 11:30, Jesus says: "Exactly as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites (by his gospel of repentance), so shall the Son of Man (by his gospel of repentance) be to this generation." He then continues by telling them that as he is greater than Jonah so shall the condemnation on Jerusalem be greater than that on Nineveh.

The author of the book of Jonah attempted to call back his contemporaries to the problems of their age. By 200 B.C. the Law and the Apocalyptists had made the Jews again as self-centered as they were before the great prophets began their work. They felt that God had no interest in anyone but themselves; and so they lived on, keeping the Law and hoping daily for the end of the world, when divine intervention would deliver them and make them supreme. This is the grave danger that an apocalypse has for any people. Suddenly, in the midst of this complacency, the author of Jonah declares that God is interested in the Gentiles and wants them to lead moral lives. Nothing is said about the Law! Furthermore, he declares that if the Jews have something better than other people it is their business to give it to them. Jonah's troubles merely show that God is displeased with a self-centered man or nation.

TOPICS FOR STUDY

What different problems did prophets of the Persian and Greek periods have from earlier days of Israel's history?

What was Haggai's message and how did it work out? In what sense did Malachi supplement Haggai?

In what respect is the Book of Zechariah like Isaiah's book? What is Zechariah's story of the woman in the ephah? Do you think he had the same opinion of women as the author of Genesis 3? Prove your answer.

Read the romantic story of *Petra* and see what new light it throws on Obadiah. What is the story of the eternal struggle between the twin nations? Why do the natives in Petra today hate the Jews in Jerusalem?

What is the story of Joel? What can we learn from Joel of the everyday life of his time?

Why should we be interested in Zechariah 9-14?

What is the teaching of the Book of Jonah? Whom does Jonah represent? Why did Jesus refer to Jonah's message to Nineveh? What is Servant's influence in this book?

Why did the Law finally silence the prophets? Why did apocalyptic ideas comfort the people? What are the differences between prophets and apocalyptists? Who are the successors of each today?

Chapter XV

Jesus of Nazareth, the Word Become Flesh

We have now traced the religious background of Jesus' people from the days of the early non-literary seers and *nabis* through the great literary prophets. We have seen the conflict between priest and prophet, ritual and inspiration. We have watched the Assyrian and Chaldean carry off the heart of a nation after razing to the ground its beloved temple and capital; then we watched the people slowly come back home, rebuild their temple and give their hearts to their Law. Gradually the Law stopped the prophets' inspiration as the people began to believe that in it God had said all that was essential or necessary. But hardships continued; the people needed comfort and to provide this comfort there grew up a class of writers who described heaven and held up a world without trouble just as soon as God should intervene. The Law and the apocalypse ruled supreme then, when a baby boy was born who to his family was known as Jesus, but to all the countryside as *the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.* (Matthew 21 : 11.)

First Day: The Prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

Then Jesus and his disciples went away to the villages in the region of Caesarea Philippi. While on the road he questioned his disciples saying to them, Who do the people say I am? Replying they said, Some think you are John the Baptist, others Elijah, yet others Jeremiah, but others that you are one of the prophets. Then he asked them, But you, who do you say I am? Peter answered and said, You are the Messiah. And he warned them against saying this to anyone about him.—Mark 8: 27-31.

Behold, I will send the Prophet Elijah to you before the great and terrible of Yahweh comes.—Malachi 4: 5, English Version.

People long before Jesus' day began to believe in the coming back to earth of certain ancient heroes. Especially their thoughts turned to Elijah who really had never died but whose ascension kept him as a living person (II Kings 2). Accordingly, when a great man appeared, people began to ask who he might be. Just as today we say, a second Lincoln, about a man who has the same attitude toward life as Lincoln had, so Jesus' contemporaries tell us that he resembled the prophets so much that they considered him to be some one of them returned to this world.[1] This belief was the more readily fixed in people's minds because he applied the title to himself. He preferred the title *prophet*[2] because there could be no misunderstanding about it. For this reason Jesus rebuked Peter severely (read the remainder of chapter 8 of Mark's Gospel) because he called him Messiah, which gave to the people the idea that he was a political revolutionist. The whole meaning is obscured in the English translation's rendering Messiah by Christ because, although Christ is the Greek equivalent of the word Messiah, it has today a meaning given it by later theology of which neither Jesus nor his disciples had ever heard. If we want to understand the Gospels historically we should substitute Messiah in the English for its Greek equivalent Christ. It is now easy to see why the priests and legalists (i.e., Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees) opposed him and sought his death. For a long time they had completely silenced the prophets. John the Baptist's career was soon cut short by the government, but Jesus gave the government no trouble. Hence, they sought his death on the ground that he was a Messiah, a political agitator, an opponent of Rome. They succeeded. His enemies nailed him to a cross as King of the Jews and because they did it, he became King of all mankind.

Why did Jesus adopt the title prophet? Why did the people consider him a prophet? Why did he object to the title Messiah? Why did the term Messiah eventually cause his death?

What did people in Jesus' day believe about Elijah and other famous men? Why?

What is the real meaning of the word Messiah? What is the Greek translation of this word? Why is it misleading to confuse these terms?

[1] Matthew 16: 14.
[2] Luke 4: 24.

Second Day: The Prophet Jesus and the Leaders of His Day.

Then the Pharisees and some Scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered about him, having noticed that some of his disciples ate without first having ceremonially washed their hands. Now the Pharisees and all the rest of the Jews will not eat unless they have washed their hands in the prescribed way, holding fast the tradition of their ancestors; likewise they eat nothing from the market unless it has been cleansed, and there are many other customs which they have inherited such as washing cups and pitchers and basins. So the Pharisees and Scribes asked him: Why don't your disciples act according to the customs of our ancestors, but with uncleaned hands eat their food? Then he said to them, Isaiah prophesied excellently about you actors,[1] as it is written:

> These folks honor me with their lips,
> But their hearts are far away from me;
> When they worship me it means nothing at all,
> For they teach lessons received from men.

You have given up God's command; you observe human tradition.—Mark 7: 1-8.

Who were these Pharisees and Scribes? During the long interval between the last of the Old Testament prophets and John the Baptist, the apocalyptists and the legalists ruled the minds of the people. Among these, two important parties, Pharisees and Sadducees, differing in a few minor points, agreed in their effort to get rid of Jesus, who proved to be upsetting the ordinary way of thinking. These parties held to the literal law; repeated their confession of faith, but lacked the moral fervor of Jesus. He never forbade the ceremonial cleansings nor found fault with them, but he did insist, like every prophet, that ceremony alone means nothing. The Scribes, being merely teachers of the law, knew nothing of the moral emphasis of the prophets and always played the part of an understudy. It is likely that many of them, earnest young men, went over to Jesus' side; but being relatively unimportant not so much was made of their conversion as of a Pharisee like Saul or Nicodemus. As he often did, Jesus here quotes Isaiah

[1] The Greek word *hypocrite* means an actor who plays a part. Cf. "All the world's a stage."

as authority for his decision. He calls the ceremonialists *actors,* which evidently outraged their feelings; thus he compared them to those who played parts in the Greek theatres which 150 years before this time had been introduced into Palestine. Ceremonial cleansing is all right but God *demands* moral purity. That is Jesus' prophetic teaching. We may be sure many earnest Pharisees agreed with him, but losing their grasp on the people and their standing in the community weighed heavily with them. It is an old conflict which stays with us today.

Why did the Pharisees watch Jesus so closely? Who were the Scribes? Why did Jesus use the prophets when teaching? Why do many people today miss the entire meaning of Jesus' *Way of Life?* Is church membership any proof of a person's moral fellowship with God? How can it be made so?

Third Day: The Prophet Jesus Completes the Law.

Don't think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets; I didn't come to destroy but to complete. I tell you truly, until heaven and earth pass away not a dot nor a dash shall pass away from the Law until it shall be perfected.—Matthew 5: 17-18.

Jesus' enemies immediately spread the report that he was a revolutionist and an anarchist. He emphatically denied these charges, saying, "On the other hand, my purpose is to fill out what used to be the teaching." He considered the Law not entirely perfect; he abrogated many parts and set up other commands. He did not consider the Old Testament inerrant. He considered neither the dietary laws, nor divorce laws,[1] nor Sabbath laws, nor methods of haircutting, as the word of God. Liberal Jews and Christians agree with Jesus perfectly on these points. These laws may be harmless or even beneficial but, nevertheless, have no direct bearing on God's demand. Jesus added himself to the Law and the Prophets, that is, he lived a perfectly pure life, the thing at which the Law aimed, but which it never accomplished.

Why did Jesus' enemies try to make the people believe that he had come to destroy the institutions of his day? Explain Luke 9: 56; Mark 14: 58. In what sense did Jesus consider the

[1] Cf. Mark 10: 4; Matthew 5: 21-48.

Prophets and Law incomplete? How did Jesus complete the teachings of the Prophets and the Law?

Fourth Day: The Prophet Jesus Completes the Law of Love.

Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there if you remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift right there in front of the altar and go first to be reconciled to your brother; Then, when you have come back, offer your gift.—Matthew 5: 23-24.

The startling thing is that you must first be sure that your brother has no grievance against you. What have you done contrary to those precepts of Jesus' *Way of Life* to offend a child of God, Jesus' brother, therefore yours? You may have all sorts of grievances against him, they may be unjust or they may be beyond your control. The grievances that cause the bitterest pain are those that the innocent suffer. But this is different. You have sinned against a person? It is a sin against God. Atone for it, if you want to serve God. The offering must be a memorial of reconciliation. The Heavenly Father cares nothing for a little, meaningless gift. Had not the great prophets before declared:

> Behold, the hand of Yahweh is not too short to save,
> Nor his ear too deaf to hear;
> But your sins have separated between you and your God.[1]

It seemed to Jesus that the people tried to find fellowship with God through gifts of various kinds called offerings, by observing certain fasts and feasts, and by reciting certain writings. But God delights in none of these things. He desires only fellowship with his children; but fellowship can be had only by living a morally clean life. Not that there was or is anything inherently wrong in offerings to the temple, but such gifts must come from clean hands and a pure heart. The people thought to find these by means of gifts.

What according to Jesus and the prophets separates a person from God? Can anyone, who has once known what God demands, pray while he is consciously living a life of sin? How does this passage apply to modern churchgoing and church-

[1] Isaiah 59: 1 f.

goers? What is the significance of *your brother's having a grievance against you* in Jesus' *Way of Life?* What grievances are beyond our control?

Fifth Day: The Prophet Jesus Illustrates the Sacrificial Life.

And he called the people along with his disciples to him and said to them, If anyone wishes to come after me[1] let him disregard himself and take up his cross and follow me. For he who wishes to save his life shall lose it, but he would sacrifice his life for me and the Gospel,[2] shall save it.—Mark 8: 34-35.

When they were on the road going up to Jerusalem, Jesus was walking ahead of them, and they were depressed, and, in fact, those who followed him were afraid.—Mark 10: 32.

The life of the Servant proved both a blessing and an inspiration. No great soul could hear about him and afterward be just the same as before. We saw in the Book of Jonah his influence in later Judaism's struggle over vengeance or missions. In Zechariah 9, we saw his teachings applied to the Messiah, radically changing the temper of the time. But the teaching of unselfish helpfulness somehow seemed foolish in the midst of matter-of-fact buying and selling, farming and fishing. The disciples had no great desire to face death for impossible ideals. They didn't want to advocate a platform which had in it such planks as "love your enemies" when it seemed to make them traitors to a long-suffering native land, and then get nothing for it in the end but the scaffold. And this is just what Jesus told them to expect.

One of the saddest and yet most glorious of all New Testament pictures is that of the last walk from Jericho up the hilly road to Jerusalem. The disciples stay behind in a state of deep and gloomy despair. They are pretty sure that Jesus will be arrested for his teachings and they will be implicated in his crime. What can they do? This they must quickly decide. Judas seems to have a plan. But others followed, too, and these also were afraid. Jesus walked ahead of them. Like the pillar of fire for his ancestors, he must be their light and leader.

[1] Be my disciple.
[2] Jesus' Way of Life.

Fearlessly he went ahead. The situation is repeated every day of every year.

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone?"

How did Jesus' *Way of Life* and his teachings of unselfish helpfulness fulfil the ideal of Servant?

Tell in your own words the situation that existed when Jesus started for Jerusalem "that killeth the prophets"?

According to Jesus, what is the purpose of life? Read Matthew 6:25-34. What laws of life do you find here?

Would anyone have believed such an ideal of life if Jesus had not died for it?

Sixth Day: The Prophet Jesus and the Philosophy of Force.

And behold one of those with Jesus having reached out his hand drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, Put your sword away into its place; for all who take the sword shall die by the sword.—Matthew 26:51-52.

Then the soldiers of the Governor having taken Jesus to the barracks collected the whole battalion around him; then they stripped him and put a scarlet robe[1] on him. Next they platted a crown of thorns and put it on his head and then put a reed in his right hand and bent their knees to him and mocked him saying: Hail! King of the Jews! And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head.—Matthew 27:27-30.

During Jesus' boyhood in Galilee he had seen and heard the results of militarism. "Wars and rumors of wars" filled the minds of the Perean Greeks across the Lake, the Jews on the Nazareth side, and around all hovered the Roman Legion. What more appropriate name could the poor lunatic of Gadara give to his devils than Legion? Jesus shared the poor wretch's bitter irony. Had not the Legion killed beautiful Galilee? It is no wonder that Jesus always declared himself opposed to war and all that goes with it. His own people and even his disciples thought his teaching too drastic and impossible to obey; for had he not told them to use love as a weapon instead of iron? But selfish patriotism, blind intolerance, and religious bigotry would

[1] A sign of royalty. The soldiers make fun of him.

not try the new power of love. They feared it; and these same monsters of injustice fear it equally today. During all the centuries since Jesus died, thousands of persons have willingly and gladly obeyed many of his commands, but this "the greatest" waits yet to be tried.

In how many ways was Jesus' boyhood surrounded by war? What is the significance of the man of Gadara's calling his devils *Legion?* What part did soldiers play in Jesus' trial and persecution before his crucifixion? Why do you suppose the soldiers were eager to torture him? What had John the Baptist said about soldiers?

Seventh Day: Jesus the Prophet, Loyal unto Death.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that murders the prophets!
And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; they don't know what they do.
What are these things which you discuss with each other as you walk along? . . . They said to him, The accounts about Jesus of Nazareth who was a mighty prophet both in deed and in word in the eye of God and all the people.—Matthew 23: 37; Luke 23: 34; 24: 17 ff.

Prophets never died in bed after a blessed old age. Every literary prophet whose death has been recorded has died by violence; and the imprisonments, harsh treatment, expulsion meted out to the others make sure the New Testament verdict that being a prophet involved being murdered. Jesus, himself, on more than one occasion recalled to the people of Jerusalem their bloody history; and repeatedly taught his disciples that the fate of the ancient prophets would be his also.

But Jesus died differently from any other prophet. Nowhere in history do we find a man writhing in the pain of death praying for his murderers. During his life he spoke as no other man spoke; it is only natural that he should die as no other man had died. He fulfilled the aspirations of the law and the ideals of the prophets; from henceforth his followers put him above both. The primitive community, the Way, proclaimed to a weary world the mighty Prophet, Jesus of Nazareth.

Compare Jesus' death with that of Socrates. Cf. Chapter IV, Study for Week, III. How do you account for the difference? How is Servant's death like Jesus'?

Why did Jesus pray for his murderers? What are his final words to Jerusalem?

Tell in your own words the earliest estimate of Jesus' teaching and life. What titles were afterward applied to Jesus?

STUDY FOR THE WEEK

Mankind hails Beethoven as a perfector of music, Da Vinci as a master artist, Goethe as a prince among writers, but none has perfected the work of living a life except Jesus Christ. For this reason all who know him feel a gratitude infinitely above that felt for any among the greatest of the sons of men. It is not necessary that each man harmonize either notes or colors or letters, but every person must live a life. Here, then, in Jesus lies the healing power for all the ages. The heart of man yearns for and demands perfection; it requires a guide, an authority. Both of these find fulfilment in him who was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Jesus perfected life.

I

JESUS, THE PROPHET

Jesus never considered that he was anything else than a prophet who dared to fulfil the Law and the Prophets both of which demanded in spirit moral perfection. Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, had been read to him as a boy; he studied them in the Nazareth Synagog school. The unselfish, moral perfection in Servant fired his soul to stand firm against the evils of his time.

Finally, when he was about thirty years old there appeared by the Jordan a prophet of the old order. Like Elijah he wore the rough dress and ate food of the bedawi, desert dweller. Like Amos he demanded a strictly moral life before God. He repudiated the mock righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees; he denounced the violence and false accusations perpetrated by the soldiers; and he forbade the tax collectors to continue cheating. He had come to sound again the long silent voice of the prophets of Israel. But this could not go on for long. Sexual irregularity ruled in the palace of King Herod, and John, like Nathan, Elijah, and Jeremiah, feared not the king but his

sin. After a brief imprisonment, the prophet lost his head. All the fiery passion among those baptized at the Jordan flamed up, but their leader was gone. Things looked dark. Must the prophetic voice again be hushed? Must violence, lust, greed, and crime rule the land for which generations of prophets had suffered and bled? Must the moral grandeur of Servant be blotted from the memory of man because of a few who, under the cloak of power or zeal for the Law, really corrupted the nation? The causes seemed lost.

On the darkest day of all there came a light from the obscure Galilean village of Nazareth. The young man had never been heard of. He had spent his life building stone houses and now and then a bit of furniture. Nobody believed either in him or in his village. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Not even his neighbors thought so. "Is not this Joseph's son?" Now they had always known the stone mason[1] Joseph. He was like his neighbors. They never saw anything exceptional in him. "Where did he get such wisdom and the ability to do these deeds? Isn't He the carpenter's[1] son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers named James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? And don't all his sisters live here among us?" Such was the case. His brothers and sisters had married Nazareth women and men, and settled at home. They all sat in the Synagog together. "And they were all angry at him. But Jesus said, A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country and in his own house." Well, people all down the centuries have been angry at him and have refused to believe in him. Jesus has, nevertheless, never been without honor, because he was a prophet and a prophet always finds honor in unknown places.

But this criticism would never have arisen had Herod not beheaded John. News travels rapidly in Palestine; it always has. Only a few hours after the head, burned brown by the hot desert sun, had fallen before the axe of the government, the news reached Nazareth. The builder, Jesus, heard of it. He had loved John and now he grieved. Death and violence always troubled his heart, as did sin. He laid down forever his hammer; from henceforth he would build character in men. John's effort should not be left without fruit. Herod then tried to kill

[1] The word translated carpenter in the Gospels means one who built houses, which in Palestine have always been built of stone.

Jesus,[1] but he feared him not. The name Jesus gave him has gone down forever as a synonym for cunning cruelty.

II

JESUS AND THE LAW

Christians all down the ages have tended to disparage, to minimize, and to deride the Law. Jesus never did this. He loved the Law as much as did the man who wrote the First Psalm. It is true that he did not consider it all to be of the same value and importance. He even repudiated some parts as not being the word of God; but he never claimed anything infallible except God. What Jesus objected to in the Law was the placing of equal importance on such commands as not to eat pork and rabbit and the command not to kill or covet.

The great prophets had never had this problem with which to contend in exactly the same way. The written Law had become fixed on the people after the rebuilding of the nation in post-exilic times. In the days of the literary prophets, the customs, sacrifices, sabbaths, and ritual had been in the hands of the priests and all summed itself up in the priestly religion. One needs only to read Amos and Isaiah, Chapter 1, to understand how fiercely and relentlessly prophet and priest withstood each other. It was only natural that they should oppose each other. The priest stood for custom, tradition, ritual; the prophet disregarded all that the priest held necessary and depended on God's voice, which gave him a continuous revelation. The problem grew more tense as the ritualistic, priestly religion after the exile became fixed in writing because soon a belief grew up that the written Law was God's word and the infallible rule for belief as well as for practice. Orthodox Jews believe that to this day. Christians who hold the Old Testament in its entirety to be the inspired, infallible word of God are thus inconsistent. It was only natural that Jesus, the successor of the great prophets, should come into conflict with the priests and the parties which held rigidly to the Law. He, however, never condemned them for holding to the Law, but called them actors (Greek, hypocrites), because they pretended to care so much for the Law but in reality nullified it by disobedience. He condemned their inconsistency. Mark's Gospel

[1] Luke 13: 31 f.

after a brief introduction gives (2:1-3:6) a rather detailed outline of the conflicts ending with the plot to kill him. Jesus' death was premeditated by the priestly party from the beginning. The issue was clear: Jesus put moral values above the ceremonial; the legalists put them on a par. Jesus chose the harder way. It is easy to pay reverent attention and to respond correctly to any ritual; but it is difficult to pray for one's enemies. It requires no great courage or character to obey strictly a rule about washing hands or to avoid certain kinds of meat (we are not over enthusiastic to eat cats, dogs, and horses!); but it requires a brave, courageous character to obey Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7).

III

JESUS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus repudiated at the very beginning of his work the popular title, appeal, and claim to the Messiahship of his people. The account of the temptation shows the effort of the Gospels to make clear Jesus' renunciation of "the kingdom of the world." Psalm Two gives the popular claim of Messiahship of Jesus' day. No wonder he considered such militaristic motives and desires to be of Satan. Jesus' age saw several Messiahs. They were immediately put down by the Roman power, but a country under a foreign rule is never content. If a leader appears, he is immediately hailed as a liberator. So with Jesus. As soon as his ability was recognized (the people in Nazareth knew him too well, at least, to accuse him of being a revolutionist) the popular voice wanted him to follow the examples of Judas of Gamala and Saddouk, who during his boyhood "became zealous to draw them (i.e., the people of Galilee) to a revolt, who both said that taxation (i.e., Roman tribute) was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty; as if they could procure them happiness and security for what they possessed, and an assured enjoyment of a still greater good, which was that of the honour and glory they would thereby acquire for magnanimity. They also said that God would not otherwise be assisting them, than upon their joining with one another in such counsels as might be successful, and for their own advantage; and this especially if they would set about great exploits, and not grow weary in executing the same; so men received what they said with pleas-

ure, and this bold attempt proceeded to a great height. All sorts of misfortunes also sprang from these men, and the nation was infected with this doctrine to an incredible degree; one violent war came upon us after another, and we lost our friends, who used to alleviate our pains; there were also very great robberies and murders of our principal men."[1] The people resolutely believed that the Messiah would be given the nations for his inheritance and the uttermost portions of the earth for his possession. We have seen how utterly foreign all this was to Jesus' purpose. For this reason, he refused to let himself be known as the Messiah. But the more he tried to keep the title from being associated with him, the more the idea spread.

Consequently, Jesus began to reinterpret the meaning of the word, putting into the old term the teaching of Servant. "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man[2] must suffer much, and be rejected by the elders, and high priests, and scribes, and be killed."[3] Naturally the disciples could not understand this. True, Servant had given his "life a ransom for many," but the Messiah was to be a savior for Jews only. Such treatment for a Messiah meant defeat before the movement began. "So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him for it. Then turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter saying, Get out of my sight, Satan; you don't think the plans of God but the plans of men."[4] But the disciples could not separate their thinking from what they had been taught before they met Jesus. When they reached Jerusalem, Judas in his disappointment betrayed him; Peter, mindful of the fate of the Galilean Messiahs and their followers, refused even to admit that he knew him. Thus, the irony of history! Jesus suffered on the cross on the charge

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[1] Josephus, "Antiquities of the Jews," Book 18: 1. Everyone interested in the Bible should know something of Josephus, who lived from 37 to 95 A.D. He thus was a contemporary of the Apostles and an inhabitant of Galilee during the period in which a large part of the New Testament literature was written. His most important writings are "Antiquities of the Jews," in which he traced the history of Israel from the earliest times till about the time of St. Paul's death; and "History of the Jewish War," which he relates as an eyewitness. This latter tells of the final revolts which led the Romans to destroy Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

[2] The term "Son of Man" also in Jesus' day meant the same as Messiah. Originally in both Hebrew and Aramaic the term meant merely *man* but during the period between the Old and New Testaments, the period of Apocryphal Literature, the term came to mean a heavenly Messiah.

[3] Mark 8: 31.

[4] Mark 8: 32 ff.

of being a political revolutionist, "King of the Jews," the very thing which he tried all his life to disassociate from his teaching.

Today when we apply the term Christ to Jesus we never think of the historical meaning of the term. To us the word Christ has entirely lost its original significance. Of course this would have to be, because Jesus' *Way of Life* could never have become a world religion if this claim of local Jewish patriotism had clung to it. Thus, the Apostles, after Jesus' resurrection, understood his teaching; and from the earliest days of the new movement they preached him to all as not only the Fulfiller of the Law and Prophets but also of the ideal of Servant. The Apostles and theologians understood the new meaning for the term Messiah. Our English translations of the New Testament usually use the Greek equivalent Christ for the Hebrew word Messiah. Thus the word Christ theologically means, the resurrected Jesus, the Savior of Men.

The Kingdom of God as taught by Jesus, of course, had no such meaning as the Jews of his time desired. They wanted a Palestinian kingdom free from foreign rule. The story told by Josephus of Judas and Saddouk illustrates the kingdom the people confused with Jesus' kingdom. Words are ever misleading! In his parables and teaching Jesus emphasized again and again that his kingdom was not of the world like that of the Romans and the one wished by Judas and Saddouk. His kingdom, too, was to include all nations and peoples; it was to grow gradually and not come "by force." Jesus condemned all revolutionary violence. He told the people plainly that if they continued in the way they were going "not one stone would be left on another" of their city and temple. In less than forty years after his death, his warning was literally fulfilled. Today many Jews are beginning to see the mistake of their fathers.

One day on the train between Jerusalem and Haifa I fell in with a brilliant young Jewish merchant. We discussed the Zionist movement, the future of Palestine, and the new Hebrew University. Finally, we drifted into comparative religions. I mentioned the name of Jesus as changing the course of religious thinking. Suddenly this young Jew turned to me and said, "If the Jews had only accepted Jesus and his teaching, today they would be a different and a better people;" then after a pause

he added, "and they would have a homeland of their own." An echo of Servant's story. The people awoke, but too late.

IV

THE CHALLENGE OF JESUS TO THE MODERN WORLD

Jesus rebuked the narrow aspirations of his people and in their wrath they disowned and rejected him. He denounced the violence, force, and militarism which characterized the Roman régime, and the soldiers retaliated by insults, mockeries, and a spear thrust on the cross. He told the religious leaders of his day the truth about their character, and they demanded his death of the Roman governor.

They killed the body of Jesus as they had killed the bodies of the prophets before him; but they could not destroy his teaching. True, only a few could comprehend it; but those who did found that he had so freed it from local and temporal ideas that it would apply to the whole, wide world. Herein speaks God! Not one nation, not one people, but all men are his children. The young Pharisee, Paul, caught this vision and forever the name of Pharisee grew nobler. What a pity that no Jewish priest saw the truth!

Soon the teachings of the dead prophet took shape in books called "The Good News" or in the Greek language *Evangel* and in Anglo-Saxon *Gospel.* No one of the authors of the Gospels, however, considered that the work had been completed. "The begining of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," wrote Mark. The beginning of the Gospel! The seed had been sown in the desert land of Palestine; it needed the rains and winds of Greece and Rome, of Europe and America and all the world to bring it to perfection. This is the challenge to our time and age. What shall we do with the Good News? How has it been to us Good News? Has it compelled us to live the clean lives which it demands as the one requirement of God? Has the Gospel inspired us to be like Servant and Jesus?

The generations have misunderstood Jesus and have only made a pretence of obeying him, because his commands have sounded so unnatural, so opposite to that which human nature expects. Listen! Love your enemies; conquer them with love and not with iron. Alas, not many people have believed love to be a power. If a man strikes you on one cheek, turn the

other. Too bad that people have made a joke of this! Jesus meant it. He did it. If he had tried to defend himself, every historian from his day to this would have believed him a defeated revolutionist. Turn the other cheek. Do the unexpected. Overcome your enemy by making him ashamed of himself.

What think you of the prophets? Are they worthy of being studied and understood? Do you want to know them as well as you do Socrates and Plato? What think you of the Prophet Jesus? Have you ever seriously studied his *Way of Life?* Let us not confuse Jesus' *Way of Life* with the familiar term Christianity. Why, Christianity has taught things contrary to the Gospel. At times it has sided with the priests and Pharisees; again, it has gone over to the side of those who struck him and put a crown of thorns on his head. Yes, let us abandon every false term and disloyal conception; let us obey Jesus' *Way of Life.* "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

TOPICS FOR STUDY

How did Jesus fulfil the teachings of the literary prophets? In what respects did he put a new teaching in place of an old one? Illustrate from the life of Elijah.

How did Jesus combine Amos and Hosea? How did he develop the Messianic teaching of Isaiah?

How did Jesus resemble Jeremiah and Servant? Why did the Apostles preach Jesus as a fulfilment of Servant?

Why did the priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, and their Scribes early plot to kill Jesus? How did he meet their plots and lies about him?

Which prophets did Jesus quote most often? Why? How did he use the parable of Jonah?

What was the result of the rejection of Jesus by his people? What did the Romans think of the Jews? In what way would the acceptance of Jesus by the people of his time have changed the whole history of the world?

Why is Christianity a misleading term to non-Christian peoples? Give some instances where Christianity has done the opposite of what Jesus taught.

What one demand did Jesus make for discipleship?

What is the historical meaning of the term Messiah (Christ)?

the theological meaning? What new meaning did this give to the term kingdom of God?

What has been the chief reason for your own personal misunderstanding of Jesus? With this in mind, how can you best correct wrong impressions in the minds of those whom you know? Do you think it is the most important thing in the world to make Jesus' *Way of Life* understood? Why? What are you going to do about it?

GENERAL REVIEW OF THE ENTIRE BOOK

What is a prophet? What does the word prophet mean? What is the Hebrew equivalent and its meaning? Why have many false ideas of prophets and prophecy grown up?

What were the predecessors of the prophets called?

Why is it misleading to divide prophets into *minor* and *major?* What is a better classification? Why?

How did the non-literary prophets live? Explain Amos 7:14.

Describe the three kinds of religion of the Old Testament. What did the prophets object to in (a) priestly religion, (b) folk religion?

What contribution did Hosea make to religion? What were the contributions of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Deutero-Isaiah, and Servant?

Can you tell a connected story of Ezekiel's life and work? Is he cherished more in the Church or Synagog? Why?

Do you think the prophets would be more readily understood if we had an English translation in modern language and in the metrical form in which they wrote? Why did the prophets write their messages in verse? Which do you think is the greatest poet? Why?

Tell in your own words the story of Servant. What influence did Servant have on Jesus' education? Why did Jesus teach that the Messiah must be like Servant and not a soldier? Why did the Apostles teach Jesus as Servant's Fulfiller?

Why did prophecy suffer after the exile? What caused apocalyptic writings to displace the prophet? What is the difference between prophecy and apocalypse? Why is Daniel an apocalypse?

Why has the Book of Jonah been misunderstood? How would you teach Jonah to a Bible School Class? What preparation would they have to have to understand Jonah?

When did the missionary motive begin in Israel? Who was the first missionary? Where did he go? Why? How many years between Servant and Jonah? How did they differ? Explain Matthew 23:15. What is the modern purpose of missions?

What is the origin of the prohibition movement? Who were the first to refuse to drink intoxicating liquors? What was the attitude of the prophets toward strong drink? What does the Koran teach about wine?

Where and when did the movement for a warless world begin? What prophet proposed a league of nations? Why did the prophets oppose war?

What was the origin of the social gospel?

Can you think of other modern movements that the prophets began?

How did Jesus "fulfil the Law and the Prophets"? What do you mean by saying that Jesus is the Savior of the world? Why should we speak of Jesus' *Way of Life* rather than Christianity?

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